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CONTENTS OF VOL IV.

PAGE.

On the Exclusive System, ... 1

The Importance and Method of Early Religious Education, ... 35

On Prejudice, ... 83

The Prospects and Claims of Pure Christianity, . 99

The Beneficial Tendency of Unitarianism, . . 135

An Explanation of the words, 'By Nature Children of Wrath,' found in Ephesians, ii. 3, ... 167

An Essay for the Understanding of St Paul's Epistles, 179

On Piety at Home, ... 203

The Antiquity and Revival of Unitarian Christianity, 219

Mr Tuckerman's Seventh Semiannual Report of his Ministry at Large in Boston, ... 247

The Reports of the American Unitarian Association, prepared for the Sixth Anniversary, May 24, 1831, 283

441

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ON THE

EXCLUSIVE SYSTEM.

BY JAMES WALKER.

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THE

EXCLUSIVE SYSTEM.

A CONSIDERABLE number of Christians in this section of the country have been entering, for some years back, into what is called the Exclusive System. This system consists in a combination to deny christian fellowship, the christian name, and all christian privileges to such as differ from them beyond a certain mark; which mark they assume the right to fix for themselves, and alter at pleasure. It would be wrong to charge this system on any one denomination, as such; for Christians of several denominations, agreeing together in what are termed fundamentals, have come into it; and besides, it is believed that there is no denomination in which there are not numbers, especially among the laity, who reprobate the whole measure as much, and as sincerely as we do. However this may be, the distinction between the Exclusive Party, constituted as I have said, and the Liberal Party, threatens to swallow up all other distinctions, and divide the church on a new principle. From the entire confidence we feel in the good sense and general intelligence of the people of this country, and in the jealousy with which they are accustomed to watch against everything that looks,

even, towards an abridgment of their liberties, we have no fears as to the final issue of this attempt. At the same time, as we can no longer shut our eyes on the fact, that an extensive and powerful combination is forming in the bosom of this community, to carry everything, in church and state, by the Exclusive System, some exertion should be made to enlighten public opinion in regard to the origin of this measure, the fallacy of the reasonings by which its friends think to recommend it, and its real tendencies.

We may observe then, in the first place, that there is no obscurity over the origin and history of this and similar usurpations. Men have always been willing that every one should think as he pleases, so long as he will please to think as they do; and this, especially when the clergy have been called in to decide the question, has commonly been the extent of their notions of religious liberty. Every sect has preached up just enough of liberality to answer its own purposes; that is to say, just enough to secure an indulgence to its own deviations from the traditionary faith. But farther than this, almost every one has agreed, that liberality must be a very dangerous thing. All have allowed a certain latitude of thinking, within which liberty may be enjoyed; but if any one should go beyond this, though in the exercise of the same liberty, he is to be regarded and treated as an apostate from the religion.

Acting on this principle, the Catholics began the Exclusive System among Christians; that is to say, they allowed a certain latitude of thinking to the members of their communion, but fixed a mark, beyond

which if any one went, he was to be regarded and treated as an apostate from Christianity. The Protestants, as one man, complained of this as a most unrighteous measure, while they were suffering under it; but no sooner had they become established as an independent church, than they adopted the same themselves. They also, like the Catholics, allowed a certain latitude of thinking to the members of their communion, but fixed a mark, beyond which if any one went, though in the exercise of that very liberty on which Protestantism itself was founded, he was to be regarded and treated as an apostate from Christianity. The consequence was, that each Protestant sect, as it fell away from the main body, received precisely the same treatment from those who called themselves orthodox among the Protestants, that is, the Protestant majority, which the first Protestants had received from those who called themselves orthodox among the Catholics, that is, the Catholic majority.

In process of time, however, the Protestant body became broken up into sects to such a degree, that no one sect retained sufficient power to overawe the rest. Some sects, meanwhile, had arisen, which from the freedom of their opinions, or their honesty in avowing them, made themselves peculiarly obnoxious, not to one sect only, but to several sects. Accordingly, these several sects, finding themselves unable to accomplish their object singlehanded, were disposed to forget their former differences, and unite their strength, in the hope that, by such a combination, they might the better succeed in hunting down the common enemy. Many remember when the great body of the Orthodox clergy

in New-England attempted to cry down the Baptists, and after them the Methodists; and after that the schism arose among themselves, between what were called the oldfashioned Calvinists, and the Hopkinsians ; but all these differences are studiously kept out of sight, and in a great measure forgotten, now that a common object of dread has appeared in the progress of Liberal Christianity. It may be worth remarking, however, in this connexion, as a curious lesson from history, and one which must do not a little to lessen the effect of their denunciations, that these sects, in their present unnatural combination, can hardly say anything so bad of Liberal Christians, as they used to say of one another.

Our attention will next be directed to the leading assumption, on which the parties in this coalition think to defend the system they have adopted. It is agreed on all sides, I believe, that a certain latitude of thinking must be expected and allowed among Christians ; but the Exclusionists maintain that limits are to be set, beyond which this indulgence shall not be extended ; and furthermore, that they are vested with authority to set these limits, and alter them at pleasure. Their whole defence turns on the question of their possessing this authority. Before proceeding to contest the claim, I wish to clear the ground I am to take from all misapprehension. The Catholic may deny that I am a Catholic ; the Baptist may deny that I am a Baptist ; the Methodist may deny that I am a Methodist, and do no wrong. For my belonging to either of these sects depends on my according with the authorized formularies of the sect in question; and whether I do, or do not accord with

these authorized formularies, the sect that made them is certainly competent to determine. The standards by which I am to be tried, in this case, are the work of man. They were instituted by the sect in question; and of course, as I have before observed, the same authority that was competent to make them, is competent to interpret and apply them. But if, merely on the strength of this, any sect, or any number of sects, presume to deny that I am a Christian, this is doing what they have no right to do.

And the reason is obvious. The fact whether I am a Christian, or not, does not depend, like the preceding, on my coming up to the commonly received standards of any sect, but on my coming up to the standard of the gospel; and whether I come up to this standard, or not, depends on which of several interpretations of the gospel is the true one. Now I have freely conceded to each sect the exclusive right to interpret and apply its own standards, because of its own framing; on the ground, that each sect must certainly be supposed to understand what were its intentions in framing these standards, what they were intended to admit, and what to exclude. But when we come to apply the gospel as a standard, the case is different; for this being a standard framed by none of the contending sects, none can set up any claim to authority or infallibility, in interpreting and applying it, which either of the others might not set up with just as much reason. You, as belonging to one sect, may say of me, as belonging to another, that I differ widely from you in the interpretation I put on the common standard acknowledged by us both. But you cannot say, that my interpretation is a false one;

for this is a point which you are not competent to decide. You may say, that I preach another gospel from that which you preach; but you cannot say, that I preach another gospel from that which Christ and his Apostles preached; for this involves a question which you are not competent to decide. I differ from you, it is true; but not more than you differ from me; and as our difference relates to a subject, respecting which you cannot pretend to any degree of authority, or infallibility, which I may not pretend to with just as much reason, if my differing from you proves me to be no Christian, your differing from me will also prove you to be no Christian. You must perceive, therefore, that this argument proves nothing, or proves too much.

Here I am prepared to meet the hackneyed plea, that the dispute is not about common differences, such differences as must always be expected, but about fundamentals. It will be said, that there must be some doctrines essential to Christianity; necessary to make it what it is, and without which it would not be what it is, but something else, another gospel. Omit any of these doctrines, therefore, and it is contended that what remains will not be Christianity; and, of course, those who embrace it will not be Christians.

Be it so. Nobody denies that Christianity, considered as a system of religious instruction, has its essential and fundamental doctrines, which are necessary to make it what it is, as a dispensation of pardon and life. But the question arises, who is to determine which these doctrines are? The Catholics said, 'We are the persons to determine, and we have determined it at the Council of Trent.' 'No,' said the Lutherans, 'not you,

but we. We are the persons to determine it; and we have determined it in the Confession of Augsburgh.' 'Not at all,' said the Calvinists; 'not at all. It was not for such persons as you to pretend to this authority. We are the persons to determine it; and we have determined it at the Synod of Dort, and afterwards in the Westminster Assembly.' 'By no means,' said the Church of England. 'Who made you, or any of you, a judge in these matters? You are not the judge; we are the judge. If you want to know which are the essential and fundamental doctrines of the gospel, the appeal must be made to the Thirtynine Articles.' Thus one sect after another has arisen, each denying to all the rest an authority which, however, in the same breath, it has had the inconsistency to arrogate to itself.

But it may be said, the doctrines which all these sects pronounce fundamental, must be so. All what sects? If by all these sects are meant all the sects in the world, the position, though conceded, would not answer the purpose of the Exclusionists; for, of course, there could be no ground for exclusion, so far as all were agreed. But if, by all these sects, are meant a certain number of sects, I would ask on what ground these sects arrogate to themselves an authority, not supposed to belong to the rest, of determining for the whole Church what shall be regarded as fundamental doctrines. In such a contest, it is with sects as it is with individuals; no one sect can set up pretensions to infallibility, which any other sect might not set up with just as much reason. And as for any additional authority to be derived from the circumstance of its being a combination of several sects, it should be considered, that on such a combina-

tion they cease to be several sects, and, so far as the Exclusive System is concerned, are to be regarded as one sect formed on a more comprehensive principle.

If, indeed, it were not only settled that there are certain essential and fundamental doctrines of the gospel, but also which these doctrines are, there might be some reason in considering such as should reject them as virtually renouncing the religion. But while the question, which these doctrines are, is the very question at issue, it is manifestly premature for either party to begin to act upon it, as if it had already been decided by a competent authority. The obvious fact seems to be strangely and unaccountably overlooked, that man's fallibility applies to his judgment respecting fundamentals; nay, that it applies in a twofold degree. It is a question whether these doctrines are doctrines of Christianity; and, if doctrines of Christianity, it is a question whether they are fundamental doctrines; both of which questions are disputed, and in both of which he may be mistaken. Were I to reject what I myself regard as essential and fundamental doctrines of Christianity, the case would be different, I allow; but this is not pretended. It is not pretended that both parties admit the doctrines in question to be essential and fundamental; but only that you hold certain doctrines to be so, which I do not. Well, then, what is to be done? Why, you must convince me that I am wrong, if you can; but, pending this controversy, you must remember that you are only a party to it, and not party and umpire too. Convince me that I am wrong, if you can; but till you have done this, you must not think, in your conduct towards me, to take it for granted that I am wrong; for this is the point to be proved, not taken for granted.

The Exclusionist will say, perhaps, that he does not assume the right of deciding this point on authority, but merely as a matter of opinion, and sincere conviction. He will say, that, *in his opinion*, I have renounced essentials of Christianity, and consequently am no Christian; and further, that the assertion is always understood with this qualifying clause. Nay, he may contend, that this is one of those interesting questions, on which a man cannot help making up an opinion on one side or the other; and after his opinion is made up, to deny him the right to express it would not be to secure, but to destroy liberty. Everything like authority being disclaimed, it may be asked, in a tone of triumph, whether this is not a subject on which a man in a free country may hold and avow his honest convictions.

Certainly he may, so long as he can do it without interfering with the rights of others. It will hardly be pretended, however, that the declaration of an opinion, merely as an opinion, is always allowable, when this declaration, true or false, must injure others. It is an acknowledged principle, and in free countries too, that we have no right to scatter about our opinions, as opinions, without considering the effect it will have on others. I do not mean by this, that our lips should be sealed on the subject of our religious differences; but I do mean, that when we open them to denounce others, and prejudice the community against them, it is not enough to say in justification, that we speak as we think.

But waiving this point, I deny the fact itself on which the whole argument is based. It is not true that the supporters of the Exclusive System avow and advocate what they term fundamentals, as mere matters of opinion.

Doctrines of minor importance they will allow to be regarded in this light, and therefore as still open to discussion; presenting questions, respecting which fair and good minds may differ. But when they come to speak of doctrines accounted by themselves essential and fundamental, their tone and manner are changed; and they speak of them, not as mere matters of opinion, but as established verities, which none are at liberty to reject, or even to doubt, and which all must see as they see, whose understandings are not darkened by moral prejudices. On other topics they would be understood to speak as they think; but on these they would be understood to speak as they know, and they are so understood in fact by a large majority of their followers; and their language, accordingly, is in the highest degree confident and overbearing, and owes not a little of its effect on the credulous and timid to this very circumstance. Nor is this all. They not only advance what they consider fundamental doctrines as established verities, but proceed immediately to act on them as established verities. The charge against Exclusionists is, not that they hold certain opinions, or that they avow and advocate their honest convictions; but that they take up certain opinions, which are mere opinions, and advance them as established verities, and act on them as such; and this, too, when they know that the feelings, reputation, and substantial interests of others are endangered or seriously injured thereby. The charge is, that forgetting their fallibility, they act towards others, and to the great prejudice of others, precisely as if they thought themselves infallible, and in a way to be justified only on such an assumption.

To this it may be replied, that notwithstanding our acknowledged fallibility, we are under the necessity of acting on opinion, and oftentimes on mere opinion, and disputed opinion, and in direct collision with the opinions, wishes, and interests of those whom we oppose. This is true in certain cases; but it is not true in any case so far parallel with that in question, as to warrant reasoning from one to another. Thus, the construction put upon a law is in some sense a mere matter of opinion among the judges, and often of disputed opinion; and yet this opinion is enforced. But then it should be remembered, that the judges are invested with authority for this very purpose; and it will hardly be pretended, that any Christian, or body of Christians, is invested with a like authority to decree what construction shall be put on the word of God. Again, I may think my neighbor unworthy of confidence, and on the strength of this opinion I may proceed against him so far as to withhold my confidence and my society; and I have a perfect right to do this, because my confidence and society are my own, and at my own disposal; but it will hardly be pretended, that the christian name and privileges are in the same sense my own, and at my disposal. Further, I may think my neighbor is not only unworthy of confidence, but a dangerous member of the community; and on the strength of this opinion I may feel called upon, not only to withhold my own confidence and society, but to denounce him publicly. And this, also, I may do in those cases provided for by the laws, because in such cases a competent tribunal exists before which I may be arraigned, where the accused will have an opportunity, if he has been wronged, to assert and

establish his innocence. But it will hardly be pretended, that in matters of faith and conscience a competent tribunal of this kind has been established amongst us, to which the injured party can appeal for redress; for to say that he may appeal to the tribunal of public opinion, is merely to answer me, and to attempt to blind me, by a figure of speech.

'Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth, or falleth.' The head of the church has been pleased to leave the questions at issue among his followers, open and undecided, with an express direction that the wheat and the tares be permitted to grow together until the harvest. Any attempt, therefore, to prejudge these questions, and act on such unauthorized prejudices, is precisely as if in civil jurisprudence a man should anticipate the legal sentence, take the law into his own hands, and proceed against a supposed offender, just as if he had been tried and condemned by the proper tribunal. You are aware that this would be accounted a high misdemeanor in the freest countries; and as the misdemeanor has nothing to do with the truth or falsity of the judgment, but consists in its being usurpation of authority, it obviously remains the same, though the supposed offender should afterwards be proved to be a real offender. For the same reason, if it should turn out hereafter, that the Exclusionist is right in his own opinions, it will not justify him in having acted on them; for he did not know that he was right, and he had no authority to injure others by acting on this presumption. We are amazed at the air of confidence with which Exclusionists often appeal for justification to the example of Jesus Christ and his apostles. As if Jesus Christ and his apostles

did not possess an authority for deciding questions of this nature, and a spiritual illumination, which few Christians of the present day, I should hope, would have the audacity to claim.

Thus far I have considered it undecided what doctrines are fundamental; but admit, for a moment, that those which are assumed to be so are really so. Does it follow, that a man must know and receive them, and every one of them, or not be a Christian? Strictly speaking, a man is not a Christian because he understands and believes the doctrines which Jesus Christ taught, but because he acknowledges and confides in Jesus Christ as a teacher. If in any way a man could be brought to confide in Jesus Christ as a teacher come from God, from that moment he would be a Christian, though as yet he had not opened the New Testament, and did not know a syllable of its contents. When Martha said, 'Yea, Lord; I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world;' and when Simon Peter said, 'We believe, and are sure, that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God;' and when the Ethiopian Eunuch said, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God;' all of them were, or from that moment became Christians, in the proper sense of that term as used at the present day, and were so regarded by the sacred writers. All of them from that moment became Christians, though as yet it only appeared, that they were prepared to receive the essential and fundamental doctrines of the gospel, and not that they already knew them, and had embraced them.

To be sure, when we come to consider the moral

effect of the doctrines of Christianity, this effect must be expected to be different according as our view of the doctrines is more or less just and perfect. In this respect certain doctrines may be said to be essential to the system itself, to make it what it is, as a dispensation of holiness. Nay, I would go farther than this, and say of every doctrine of Christianity, however minute and subordinate, that it is essential to the system itself, to make it precisely what it is, considered as a dispensation of holiness. When, therefore, certain doctrines are singled out, and treated as essential and fundamental doctrines of Christianity, it is only a loose and inaccurate mode of speaking; not meaning that they are the only doctrines essential to the system, for in this sense all the other doctrines are essential; nor yet that these doctrines are more essential than the rest, for this would be a solecism, essential not admitting of degrees; but merely that these doctrines are peculiarly important for their moral effect. We should be again and again reminded, however, that when we speak of essential doctrines, we mean essential to the system itself, and not that a belief in them is essential. It is a belief in the system as a system, that makes a man a Christian, and not a belief in these particular doctrines; though a belief in these particular doctrines may have a tendency to make him a better Christian.

Hence the fallacy of those Exclusionists, who think to justify themselves by saying, that as we differ in essentials and fundamentals, if they are Christians, we are not; and if we are Christians, they are not. For, though we do differ in essentials and fundamentals, it does not follow but that both parties may be Christians;

so that there may be an injustice in denying the name and privileges to either. It may be as in a civil war, growing out of a difference of opinion as to what is best calculated to promote the public weal; in which both parties, though opposed to one another in things essential and fundamental, profess to be patriots, and both parties may in fact be patriots. It may be proper, also, in this connexion, to expose the mistake of those, who argue that we have the same reason to question a man's right to the christian name and privileges, for errors of doctrine, as for errors of life. A man does not cease to be a Christian merely because he has been guilty of immoralities; for in this case nobody would be a Christian, for there is none that doeth good, and sinneth not, no, not one. But a man's immoralities may be of such a kind, or to such a degree, as to bear heavily on the question of his sincerity and veracity. We wish to know whether a man really believes in Jesus Christ, as the Messiah; and in determining this point we have a right to consider, and indeed we cannot help considering, his actions, as well as his professions. A man's errors of life, therefore, may do what his errors of doctrine cannot. They may destroy all confidence in his assertions, and convince us that he does not believe what he says he believes; in other words, that he is not a Christian, but an impostor.

All this, however, it may be said, is very well to those who think so; but it can have no influence, and it ought to have none, on those who are otherwise minded. So long as the convictions of Exclusionists continue as they are, conscience will not permit them to pursue a different course. How can they conscientiously hold any

intercourse with a man as a Christian, when they do not believe him to be a Christian; especially since such conduct must have the effect to countenance him in holding and propagating doctrines, which they may not only regard as errors, but as fatal errors? Let their principles be ever so false, and their reasonings ever so inconclusive, still if they really believe that a man is not a Christian, must they not act on this belief, and treat him accordingly?

This argument seems to proceed on the assumption that if a man has an opinion on any subject, he is bound in conscience to act on it; but is this assumption well founded? On the contrary, if a man forms an opinion on any subject, is he not bound in conscience, before he acts on it, to consider whether he has weighed the evidence on both sides; whether his previous habits and studies have prepared him to decide the question; and above all, whether the question is one, which from its own nature, any man is competent to decide? Perhaps he cannot help holding his opinion, right or wrong; but he can help acting on it; and he is bound in conscience to do this, until he is convinced, that it relates to a question, which he is competent to decide, and is authorized to decide. Now, as it has been shown that the question whether a man is a Christian or not, is one which no man is competent to decide, or authorized to decide for another, it follows, that instead of being bound in conscience to act on an opinion formed on this subject, we are bound in conscience to refrain from acting. In short, the whole question resolves itself into this; is a fallible man bound in conscience to act as if he were infallible?

But certainly the Exclusionist thinks he is obeying

conscience, which is the same thing. The same thing with what? Even in a moral view, and as respects the individual himself, is it the same thing whether he really obeys conscience, or only mistakes his will for his conscience? Besides, we are not testing men, but measures. The question, therefore, is not, whether he thinks that conscience constrains him to pursue the course he has adopted; but whether he ought to think so, whether he has sufficient reason for thinking so, even on his own principles; and we have shown that he has not. I have no disposition to say of Exclusionists generally, that they are not sincere. Any man is sincere, who acts from an opinion which he really holds, however hastily formed, and however incompetent he may be to decide the question to which it relates. But when we come to speak of what conscience requires or forbids, I maintain that every man is bound by this principle, before he acts on any opinion to the injury of another, to consider and ascertain whether he is competent to decide the question at issue. If, therefore, hurried on by his passions or prejudices, he neglect to do this, I may still admit, that he is sincere; but I cannot see, how he can be said to have consulted his conscience; and much less, that conscience lays a necessity on him to act in this manner. I repeat it, I have no disposition to call in question the sincerity of Exclusionists, nor is it necessary to the argument; though I must remark, in passing, that the protestations of the party concerned are not the best evidence of sincerity; and furthermore, that there is hardly any virtue, in regard to which men are more liable to self-deception.

Besides, what is there in this plea of conscience, or of

zeal for the truth, or of concern for souls, that will justify the Exclusive System, and not justify, at the same time, almost every measure of usurpation, injustice, or cruelty, that has ever been attempted under the name of religion? Utter extermination was decreed against the Albigenses in France, and afterwards against the Lollards in England; the English Protestants, down almost to the Revolution under William and Mary, continued to drag to the stake, or to drive into exile, the Anabaptists and Arians; and Calvin himself could instigate in the heat of passion, and afterwards justify in cold blood, the burning of Servetus before a slow fire made of green wood. History is full of details of such outrages, committed, and to all appearances sincerely, on this same plea of conscience, a zeal for the truth, and concern for souls. Admit it, therefore, in one instance, and where shall we stop? When urged in favor of the Exclusive System, as conducted at the present day, I do not say it is entitled to less regard than in the cases above mentioned; but I ask for reasons to convince me that it is entitled to more.

A distinction, I know, is attempted to be drawn in favor of those, who would check the progress of errors by ecclesiastical penalties only; which is all that modern Exclusionists pretend to justify in this country. On the strength of this distinction it is contended, that it is at the same time illogical and unjust to array against the Exclusive System, as conducted at present in this country, prejudices to which it is liable only when enforced by the civil arm. It seems at length to be conceded, that neither the reasonings nor motives of the Exclusionist will justify him in injuring me in my life, prop-

erty, or personal liberty, let him be ever so sincere, and even though he should be able to work himself into a belief, that this could be right; but still it is contended, that they will justify him in injuring me by ecclesiastical censures. The popular objections and prejudices against the Exclusive System do not hold, it is thought, against the system itself; but only against the harsh and cruel means that have been employed in enforcing it.

I suspect it will be found, on a closer examination, that this distinction is not of so much importance in the present controversy, as is generally supposed. If we inquire into the manner in which the Exclusive System has been carried into execution in different ages and countries, it will be found that its friends have always adopted the most decisive and energetic means, which the age or country would bear. So long as they dared to touch the life of the supposed misbeliever, they were satisfied with nothing short of his blood. When they no longer dared aim at this, they were obliged to content themselves with maiming his person, tearing out his tongue, cutting off his ears, or branding him in the forehead. As society became more refined, and scenes like these became more revolting and intolerable to public feeling, they found it necessary so far to relent as to be satisfied with sending him into perpetual banishment, or with immuring him in prisons and dungeons, like a common felon. In the onward march of improvement, mankind came at length to have some faint understanding of the rights of conscience, and the friends of the Exclusive System had to accommodate their policy to this further change in public opinion; and leaving untouched the life and liberty of the supposed misbeliever,

they were obliged to content themselves with confiscating his property, or mulcting him in heavy and ruinous fines. Society and the human mind continuing to advance, it soon became necessary for them, in some countries, to give up this check on dissent, as they had the preceding; and their next plan was to compel uniformity by subjecting the recusant to civil disabilities, making him ineligible to any of the high offices of state, and incapable of holding certain kinds of property, or of prosecuting his rightful claims in a court of justice. At last, even this expedient has failed them in this country, leaving them no other possible resort but what are termed ecclesiastical censures. These consist in denouncing the offender as an apostate from Christianity, a disguised infidel; and in doing everything in their power, without the aid of the civil arm, to lessen his credit and influence as a Christian among Christians.

While I admit, therefore, that a gradual improvement has been going on, I cannot give the credit of this improvement to those who have been disputing its progress inch by inch. I cannot give a man much credit even for being better, if it can be shown that he is still as bad, as under existing circumstances he dares be, or can be. If the friends of the Exclusive System would take to themselves any credit for the milder measures that are now employed to coerce uniformity, let them show, if they can, that they have adopted these milder measures any sooner, or any further, than they have been compelled to adopt them.

Much stress is laid on the distinction, that modern Exclusionists, at least in this country, do not avail themselves of the aid of the civil arm. But it should be

considered, that the true question is, not whether they avail themselves of the aid of the civil arm, but whether their measures are not adapted to injure us in our civil relations. The injustice of former Exclusionists, the Spanish Inquisition, for example, did not consist simply in employing the civil arm to inflict the penalities they adjudged, but in adjudging such penalities as affected the supposed misbeliever in his civil relations. What if instead of intrusting the execution of their sentence to the civil officer, they had chosen to use the influence they possessed over the public mind, to cause their victim to be put under the ban of society; or had given him up to be torn in pieces on the spot by an incensed populace? Would this have made the proceeding less cruel, or less unrighteous?

Now, will any one pretend, that the Exclusionists of this country do not aim to injure their opponents in their civil relations? Denounce me as an enemy of the truth, and a hater of God; call in question my sincerity, and impute my supposed errors to a corrupt heart; hold me up as a dangerous man in the community, a man with whom it must be unsafe to associate from the contagion of my bad principles; make use of my religious opinions to prevent my political elevation, or represent them as a sufficient reason, why I should not be entrusted with the education of the young; — this is the course pursued by most Exclusionists in this country,—and will any one pretend, that this is not to attempt to injure me in my civil relations? Is it not to attempt to injure me in my standing and prospects in society? But my standing and prospects in society are as much my property as a good citizen, as my houses and lands; and nothing,

therefore, will justify an attempt to injure me in one, which would not also justify an attempt to injure me in the other. Make it to be just to do what the Exclusionists of this country have often done ; make it to be just to sow dissension in my family, to injure me in the good opinion of my friends and the community, to subject me to any imputation whereby I may suffer either in my comfort, business, or character as a member of society ; make it to be just to do this, without any authority for so doing, on the strength of a mere opinion, which may be right, or may be wrong, and there is nothing the Spanish Inquisition ever did, which was not just. I do not mean, that the conduct of modern Exclusionists is equally revolting to humanity ; but I maintain, that it is alike irreconcilable with the principles of strict justice, and religious liberty.

Once more, it may be replied, that my objections are still directed against the abuses of the Exclusive System, or at least against its incidental effects, and not against the system itself. Men may be Exclusionists, sincere and consistent, and yet their only object be to sever the erring member's connexions with the church ; and if their doing this has the effect to injure him in his civil relations, it is an effect merely incidental, and not intended ; and consequently neither they, nor the system, are responsible for it.

I deny that this effect is merely incidental. The system and its abettors are responsible, not only for its immediate effects, and those which are really desired and intended, but also for all those which they must see will follow, not incidentally, but necessarily. Now the very act of severing a man's connexions with the

church on the principle avowed in this system, is to hold him up to view as an infidel, and the more to be dreaded and shunned because a disguised infidel. And will any one pretend, that this must not necessarily injure a man in his civil relations? Would any one like to have his children regard him as an infidel? Would a man be as likely to form good connexions in life, or be received into good society, if he were regarded by all who knew him as an infidel? With respect to many, would it not even affect the confidence reposed in him as a man of business, to have it generally understood, that he is a disguised infidel? We all attach some importance to the moral restraints which Christianity imposes; and must it not, therefore, take something from a man's credit in the community, to have it supposed that these restraints are not felt by him? All these effects must be seen to follow, not incidentally, but necessarily, from the very act of severing a man's connexions with the church, on the ground that he is not a Christian. You may say, perhaps, that if he is not a Christian, they ought to follow. And so they should; but not until this question is decided by a competent authority. You have no right to touch a hair of his head, on the ground that he is not a Christian, until this question has been decided by a competent authority.

Much of the wrong done men in their civil relations follows, therefore, necessarily from the Exclusive System, and consequently may be fairly charged on the system itself. True, in an enlightened community like ours, where liberal principles prevail to so great an extent, the denunciations of the Exclusionist may not be generally respected, and so lose much of their effect.

But I am speaking of what would follow in a community, where these denunciations are generally respected ; and it is certainly no fault of the system, or its supporters, that they are not so respected everywhere. Besides, if from any cause this system has become a powerless instrument of injustice, it does not make it less inexcusable to attempt to revive its energies, though the attempt should fail.

I go farther than this. The practice of voting members into churches, and voting members out, has insinuated the idea, that the question whether a man is a Christian, or not, is left to be decided by vote, by a show of hands. And yet can any one be so senseless, as to think that a man is any more a Christian, merely because a knot of his friends say so ? or that he is any less a Christian, merely because a knot of his enemies say so ? A man is a Christian, because he possesses in himself the requisite qualifications ; and not because, in a small church in an obscure village, four out of half a dozen have said, Aye. If a man possesses in himself the requisite qualifications, he is a Christian ; and when such a person comes and claims the name and privileges of a Christian, he claims no more than what is manifestly his right ; a right, moreover, accompanied with a corresponding obligation in others to respect it. If he is a Christian, he has the same right to the name and privileges of a Christian, that he has to the name and privileges of a citizen, and no self-constituted tribunal has any more authority to attempt to deprive him of the former, than of the latter. Could it be shown, therefore, that the Exclusive System does not interfere at all with our civil relations, or that it is not answerable for such interference, still it could not be defended.

There are those who seem to regard the church as a kind of corporation, possessing corporate rights, and among the rest, the right of enacting its own by-laws, in the form of a covenant, and excluding all such as will not concur in this covenant. If by this it is merely meant, that a number of Christians have a right to go off, and communicate by themselves, and draw up rules and regulations for the government of the association, few, I presume, would be disposed to quarrel with the measure; so long, I mean, as it does not interfere with the rights of others, and is not resorted to for the purpose of fixing a stigma on others, or with a knowledge that it will have this effect; though under any circumstances, I suspect, it would be accounted an odd way of evincing their christian sympathies. Unquestionably in almost every social act, a man has a right to choose his own companions; but he has no right to do this on the declared assumption, that his companions are honest men, and all the rest of the world are knaves, and are to be treated as knaves. For the same reason, a Christian may have a right to choose his own companions in worship, and in the other ordinances of religion; but he has no right to do this on the declared assumption, that his companions are good Christians, and all the rest of the world deists and infidels, and to be treated as deists and infidels. The conditions, on which a man is entitled to the christian name and privileges, have not been left to be instituted at the present day, but are set forth in the gospel, and every one is at liberty to interpret them for himself. If by 'church,' therefore, we are to understand the whole body of believers, all who are entitled to the christian name and

privileges, it is not true, that it can be compared to a corporation having authority to decree the terms, on which new members shall be admitted; for these terms are prescribed by a higher power, and the church cannot alter them nor add to them; and the right to interpret them is not given to the church in its corporate capacity, but is expressly reserved to each individual, who is responsible to God, and to no one else. Indeed, this pretext, that the church is a corporate body, vested with authority by its great Head to determine, either by arbitrary institutions, or arbitrary interpretations, who shall be considered as Christians, is at the bottom of all the usurpations of the Church of Rome; and it is on this principle, that all her usurpations are supported.

I have intimated, repeatedly, that Exclusionists associate and act in a manner to interfere with the rights of other Christians; but it may be said, that if they do, it is because there is an unavoidable collision of rights; and in such a case, they have as good right to their way, as we have to our way. But this unavoidable collision of rights exists only in the imagination of the Exclusionist. He may believe as much as he pleases, or as little as he pleases; and he may worship when he pleases, and where he pleases; and so long as we have reason to think that he is governed, in what he does, by a sincere regard for the gospel, as he understands it, we shall not question his title to the christian name and privileges; and what more can he possibly claim? We recognise and respect in others the same rights which we assert for ourselves, and where, then, I ask again, is this unavoidable clashing of rights? If, indeed, not content with exercising the right of judging for themselves,

any individual, or any number of individuals, assume the prerogative of judging for everybody else, this produces a clashing, I admit ; not, however, a clashing of rights, but the clashing of an arrogant and unfounded assumption with one of the best established privileges of human nature, freedom of thought. It is not a collision of rights, but a collision of wills ; and, in such a case, it does not follow, because both parties cannot have their will, that one party has as good a right to have it, as the other. In such a case, that party only has a right to gratification, whose will is such, that gratifying it will not interfere with the just claims of the other. Now, let the course recommended by Liberal Christians be universally adopted, and I ask, on what right of the Exclusionist would it infringe in the smallest degree, unless it be the right to do wrong, or the right of the strongest ?

But adopting this course, what do we leave to protect the church against the inroads and progress of error ? I answer, argument, persuasion, the example of good men, the promises of the Saviour, and the providence of Almighty God. If any one hesitates to commit his cause to such keeping, I think it a fair inference, either that he distrusts God, or that he distrusts his cause.

I have stated, as briefly as I could, the reasonings by which Exclusionists think to defend themselves ; and, I believe, I have exposed the fallacy of these reasonings, and followed it through most of its windings and subterfuges. It only remains for me to notice some of the practical tendencies of the system.

I speak to Protestants, and I ask them to consider

with what feelings they ought to regard a system, the tendency of which is to set aside and deny the principles of the Reformation ? If any sect could present the shadow of an excuse for persisting in exclusive measures, it would be, beyond all question, the Church of Rome ; because, while the pretensions on their part is quite as well founded in all other respects, it certainly has the advantage of priority and consistency over that of any other denomination of Christians. They were the first to adopt this policy ; and to make it consistent, they at the same time pretended, not only that their church was the only true church, but that God had guarantied infallibility to its decisions on all points touching what is necessary to be believed. The Exclusive System, therefore, is consistent with the principles openly maintained by this church ; but it is wholly subversive, as I conceive, of the principles of true Protestantism. These principles are, the sufficiency of the Scriptures and the right of private judgment, leaving to every Christian the liberty of interpreting the bible for himself. But in this liberty to interpret the bible for himself is included the liberty of coming to his own conclusions as to its true import. It is idle, it is absurd, to talk about a man's right to interpret the bible for himself without a forfeiture of the christian name and privileges, and yet not allow him to come to his own conclusions as to its true import, without subjecting himself to this penalty. How little, comparatively, has been gained by reformation in religion, up to this hour, if we have merely secured ourselves against oppression by the civil arm in matters of conscience ? And, besides, this has not been gained so much by a

reformation in religion, as in civil government. If we are tired of Protestantism, let us give it up, and go back again to the bosom of the venerable mother of the churches ; and not think, in the true spirit of slaves, to cheat ourselves with the name of liberty, after having surrendered all its privileges. At any rate, let us go back to her principles, so that though we may not be consistent with reason, or justice, or scripture, we may at least be consistent with ourselves.

I speak to the people of New-England, and I ask them to consider the countless evils, which the Exclusive System has inflicted, and is still inflicting, on society. Here I shall not remind you of the wars it has kindled, of the kingdoms it has rent, of the massacres it has instigated and countenanced, and of racks, and fagots, and dungeons ; for the day has gone by for the repetition of such outrages. Your attention ought rather to be directed to the thousand ways, by which, in the present state of things, this system may be made to disturb the peace and happiness of the community. Just so far as it prevails, it puts power into the hands of ambitious and designing men to foment disputes and divisions of the most malignant character. They can creep into your families, and sow discord there. They can enter into a village, where all is harmony and good neighborhood, and in the course of a few days raise there a spirit of censoriousness and evil judging, produce estrangement among old friends, and create miserable feuds, which it will take years on years to allay. Perhaps nothing has done so much for the order, virtue, and religion of New-England, as her parochial establishments, and the regular and independent manner in

which religious institutions have been supported and observed. But let this system prevail, and it puts power into the hands of men of very ordinary abilities, to disturb, if not to break up, almost every parish in the country. The consequence will be, that many of these parishes will be torn and divided, and as neither party will be able to meet the expense of maintaining regular worship, it will be given up in part, or altogether, or they will be obliged to depend on begging for a precarious and humiliating resource. Worse than all, it is the tendency of this system, and I believe I may say its design and object, to connect religion with politics, and make a man's political elevation to depend, not on his abilities, fidelity, and public services, but on his belonging to a particular party in the church, or on his willingness to prostitute his official influence in promoting the views of this party. May God Almighty shield this land from the train of evils that would follow the success of such a combination!

We may be told, however, that these are only incidental evils, and much more than counterbalanced by the good influences of the system. But I ask that one of these good influences may be named. Has it aided the progress of truth? No. It has much oftener been employed to prop up the tottering throne of error; and even when it has been directed against error, error has arisen, and made itself strong, under the protection of the generous sympathies of men against such unrighteous measures to put it down. Has it promoted in any way the best interests of humanity? No. The Father of our spirits has made us much more capable of judging what is good, than what is true. What excuse, then,

can they have to offer, who, in a blind devotion to their own uncertain prejudices, have sought to propagate them, though on the ruins of everything that can make society peaceful, prosperous, and happy ? Has it made men more virtuous ? No. It has roused and inflamed, on both sides, passions that scorn the restraints of conscience, and men have sought to carry their objects in religion by means that would have disgraced a scramble for office in times of high political excitement. Has it increased men's regard for the Saviour ? No. They have pretended to be contending for his honor, but they have forgotten what he said, 'A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another ; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.' And our piety to God, has that been heightened by a system which tramples on the meek and mild principles of our nature, and gives ample field to its fierce and bad passions ? No. What then has this system done ? Evil, unexampled evil, nothing but evil. Oh ! how different from him whose whole life was love ! Oh ! how different from that religion, which is 'first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy !' When will men learn that the highest reverence they can pay to the truth, is to obey it themselves, and the best way in which they can illustrate it and recommend it to others, is by an example that all must admire for its loveliness and consistency ?

Once more, then, let me conjure the serious, enlightened and well disposed to make up their minds on the merits of a controversy, in which, as I have said, almost every other is likely sooner or later to be merged. Is

it for man to judge and act as if he were infallible, especially in regard to those dark and abstruse questions in theology, which have occupied and divided the most gifted minds from the beginning? The world, as it has grown older and wiser, has grown more liberal. Would you have us go back, and breathe again the spirit of the dark ages? It is not enough considered, that if the positions which I have taken be tenable, exclusiveness in religion is not an error merely, but a sin, and to be resisted as such, and shunned as such. In our dreams of a perfect man we always make him strict and inexorable toward himself, candid and tolerant toward others. This is Liberal Christianity. The charity which the gospel enjoins 'beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.' 'And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.'

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THE

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OF

EARLY RELIGIOUS EDUCATION.

By REV. HENRY MONTGOMERY.
Of Ireland.

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RELIGIOUS EDUCATION.

'A child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.'—*Solomon.*

THE advice given by Solomon, to 'train up a child in the way he should go,' points out to us the only way, in which any considerable advances can be made towards the extension of piety and morality. Those who have attained maturity, or arrived at old age, may indeed sometimes be improved; but, as it is always difficult to overcome prejudices and habits, every man who truly aims at the solid improvement of his species, will direct his efforts to that point, in which they are most likely to be successful. Where prejudices cannot exist — where evil habits cannot have been formed — where worldly maxims and pursuits have not had time to make inroads upon the integrity of the heart — this is the soil (the open, the ingenuous, the uncontaminated bosom of youth,) in which prudence and affection will sow the good seeds of religion and virtue, with the rational and delightful prospect of an abundant increase.

We, my fellow christians, look upon little children, not as the objects of God's wrath, but as the peculiar objects of his paternal affection. We do not, indeed,

consider them to be perfect; they have within them, the elements of future actions; of propensities and passions, of virtues and vices, which may raise them to honor, or sink them to degradation: but we view their hearts and their minds as subjects of moral culture; as soils, which we may wonderfully improve, and into which we may cast good seed; or, as fields, which we may permit to be overgrown with weeds, or even to be sown with tares by an enemy. In fact, we adopt the admirable and incontrovertible sentiment of John Locke, and look upon the infant heart and mind, 'as clean white sheets of paper,' upon which the characters of virtue may be traced by the hand of prudence, or those of vice imprinted by the hand of folly. Considerable difference, no doubt, sometimes exists between one child and another, (as there does in all other animals,) with regard to talents and constitutional temperament; but the wisest of men have maintained, and experience has fully proved, that the difference produced by nature is much less than that which is produced by education. Nature, with a benignant and impartial hand, has bestowed her gifts equally upon the savage, and the civilized; yet, when we contemplate a barbarous horde, and turn again to a cultivated and christian community, we can scarcely trace the characters of the same species. And, even in civilized countries, the disparity between one man and another, between the unlettered peasant, for instance, and the accomplished philosopher, is truly astonishing; yet, the difference is not the work of nature. As to the ground-work and essentials of true greatness, it is very possible, that the clown may be, in reality, the superior man.

In fact, the general history of mankind, and the brief page of our own observation and experience, incontestibly prove, that men are almost entirely the creatures of education. Our knowledge, our tastes, our habits, our manners, our morals, nay, even our very religious opinions, principally depend upon it. There is no being in creation so little what nature formed it as man. If we look to any of the inferior animals, we find the same species almost exactly similar, on every part of the globe; but we never see two tribes or two nations of men alike; nor even two individuals of the very same country and society. Manners and customs, virtues and vices, knowledge and ignorance, principles and habits, are, with but little variation, transmitted from one generation to another; and, if we look for man in a state of nature, he is a being no where to be found. In every country, education and circumstances chiefly form his principles and habits; and these almost invariably remain with him through life; so that he is much more permanently what he has become, than what he was created. The wise men and the fools, the saints and the sinners, the ornaments and the disgraces, the benefactors and the scourges of the world, are not the work of nature, but of man. I do most cordially agree with a sentiment which I have somewhere seen expressed, 'that nature never made a villain.' Constitutional temperament and mental powers may render some an easier prey to temptation and circumstances, than others; but I do most firmly believe, that in almost every case, the natural energies and talents, which have carried unfortunate wretches onward to the commission of enormous crimes, would, if they had been

properly directed from childhood, have exalted them to eminence in virtue. The very same misguided ingenuity that has brought many a miserable malefactor to the gallows, might have raised him, under happier circumstances and better instruction, to fortune and to fame. Do we not find, indeed, in strict conformity with this position, that almost all the wretched beings, who forfeit their lives to the outraged laws of society, attribute their destruction to a neglected education, or to evil company in their earlier days? What an awful and important lesson is this circumstance calculated to teach parents, and, indeed, to all who have, in any way, the oversight and guidance of the young! A single folly encouraged, a single evil passion suffered to triumph, a single vicious habit permitted to take root, in what an awful catastrophe may it one day terminate!

It may not be unnecessary to state here, that by the word education, which I have already used, and which I shall have occasion frequently to use in this discourse, I do not mean merely, nor even principally, school learning; but, in the widest sense, everything which has a tendency to influence the mind, the principles, the temper, and the habits of the young. In this legitimate sense of the term, we are bound to consider the restraining of improper desires, and the encouragement of virtuous sentiments, to be a much more important part of education, than having children taught to read and write, and cast accounts. This valuable species of moral instruction even the most illiterate parent is capable of bestowing, and has constant opportunities of bestowing; and, believe me, he or she, who omits this duty, will one day have bitter cause to lament such negligence.

The temper and dispositions of a child, upon which so much of the happiness or misery of life depends, are the earliest objects of watchfulness and interest; and every person, who has at all observed children, must be aware how exceedingly early these begin to develope themselves. In fact, they appear almost with the first smile, or the first tear; and it is quite astonishing, how soon the infant can read the expression of the countenance, and how soon it becomes sensible of praise or blame. Long before it can either utter or understand a single syllable, the little physiognomist can decipher the sentiments of the mind, in the features of the face. So wonderful is this almost instinctive perception of character, that, I think, I have never seen a child spontaneously extend its arms to a person who was decidedly cruel or ill natured. Even then, education may begin; nay, I am persuaded, ought to begin. I know that there is nothing more common with parents, and with others who have the care of children, than to laugh at violent bursts of bad temper, or instances of peevishness and selfishness: and this practice is usually palliated upon the weak supposition, that such feelings may be easily subdued as the child grows older; or, to use the vulgar phrase, 'when it gets more sense.' But, I firmly believe, that in nine cases out of ten, the requisite portion of sense never comes; whilst the pernicious tendency and habit as certainly remain. This may appear a very trifling, perhaps undignified, or even ludicrous remark; but, from experience and observation, I am deeply convinced of its importance; well knowing, that nothing so materially tends to sweeten or to embitter the cup of human life as TEMPER.

A well regulated temper is not only an abundant source of personal enjoyment and general respect to its fortunate possessor, but also of serious advantage to others in all the social relations. I have seen the mother of a family, under its hallowed influence, moving in the domestic circle with a radiant countenance, and like the sun in the firmament, diffusing light and joy on all around her. I have seen her children artless and happy, her domestics respectful and contented, and her neighbors emulous in offices of courtesy and kindness. Above all, I have seen her husband returning, with a weary body and an anxious mind, from the harassing avocations of the world; but, the moment he set his foot upon his own threshold, and witnessed the smiling cheerfulness within, the cloud of care instantly passed away from his brow, and his heart beat lightly in his bosom, and he felt how much substantial happiness a single individual, in a comparatively humble station, may be enabled to dispense. Yet, how many scenes of a very different character are every day exhibited in the world, where the evils of poverty are augmented ten-fold by the miserable burthen of a peevish and repining spirit; and where the blessings of affluence seem only to supply their possessors with additional means of manifesting the extent of wretchedness, personal and social, which ill-regulated tempers are able to produce! Many a man, whose judgment is adequate to direct the destinies of nations, whose eloquence enraptures senates, and whose playful wit and vivid fancy render him the idol of the brilliant circles of fashion, is, nevertheless, totally unable to govern his own temper, and never enters his home, (that spot which, of all others upon earth,

should be peculiarly consecrated to gentleness and affection,) in any other character than that of a cold, gloomy and capricious tyrant. Let it be remembered, too, that the influence of temper is coextensive with society itself; and it will not appear a matter of trifling moment, to devise the best means of regulating and restraining a principle, so intimately associated with the general happiness of our species.

Next to the regulation of the temper, should come what may be termed the moral part of education; and this, I am persuaded, may also commence at a very early period of life. Children can distinguish between right and wrong much sooner than a superficial observer would imagine. Playthings are to them the same as property to men; and in the details of the nursery may be found a miniature representation of almost all the passions, that actuate society. Sentiments of honor, generosity, integrity, benevolence, and truth may all be cherished at a very early age; whilst meanness, selfishness, dishonesty, unkindness and falsehood may be as early and effectually restrained.

So fully am I convinced of the paramount importance of a minute and anxious attention to the very dawnings of reason and of passion, that I am convinced, if we knew the early history of the eminent men who have most adorned and benefited the world, we might trace back the stream of their usefulness and their fame to the nursery — to the pure fountain of maternal prudence and affection. I trust I shall not be accused of degrading either my character or my office, by the meanness of flattery, when I declare my firm persuasion, that in all the

social, friendly, and most estimable relations of life, in everything that tends to sweeten the cup of mortality, the influence of woman is inconceivably superior to that of man. But it is in the earliest and most important years of existence, that her influence is of unspeakable consequence. The first dawning of reason, the first stirring of passion, the first line of character, are marked by her eye. Her familiarity and affection remove all restraint, and she can distinctly perceive the very inmost workings of the heart and mind. 'From earliest dawn till latest eve,' her eye follows the beloved object of her hopes and fears; so that she enjoys constant opportunities of checking every symptom of folly, encouraging every appearance of virtue, and deducing lessons of improvement from every occurrence, and from every surrounding object. On the contrary, man, engaged in the turmoil of business, the cares of a profession, or any of the thousand harassing avocations of the world, returns home, rather to relax his mind, by indulging his little ones, than to search for imperfections, or to punish faults. His return is generally a little jubilee in the domestic circle, and it would be hard to act the part of a rigid censor; to cast a gloom over cheerful faces, or to freeze the current of enjoyment in happy hearts. Praise is always freely, if not always justly given; and the father of a family often knows less of the real dispositions and characters of his children, than the humblest domestic in his establishment.

If we look to the commencement of learning, it is upon the mother that task also must fall. Her patience, her perseverance, her affection, alone, are equal to sustain

the irksome drudgery of that weary season — irksome, even where nature has been most bountiful; but peculiarly harassing, where she has been sparing of her gifts. And then, in sickness, in all the various diseases incident to youth, who to sustain the heavy head, to administer the healing medicine, to watch the feverish slumber, to bear with all the untoward peevishness of youthful suffering — who, but that same unwearied friend, that kindest gift of Heaven — the Christian Mother?

Fully, therefore, am I convinced, that in the commencement of education, which gives direction to the whole of coming life, mothers have by far the more difficult and more important duties to perform. No young person (and I would to God that I could imprint this sentiment indelibly upon every youthful mind) can ever be sufficiently grateful to a good and a prudent mother; nor sufficiently thankful to a benignant Providence, if he have been blessed with such a parent. But, if such be the inestimable advantage of maternal affection regulated by prudence, and of maternal gentleness tempered by firmness, the evil accruing to children from a weak, a careless, or a wicked mother, is equally incalculable. Of all the calamities which could befal an unfortunate family, that of an indiscreet, negligent, criminal, irreligious mother, would seem to me the greatest. Hence, Solomon so emphatically observes — 'A child left to himself bringeth' (not his father but) 'his mother to shame.' His misconduct reflects peculiar disgrace upon that parent, who, from her situation and duty, has been placed by nature, to watch over his early years; to train him up in the paths of religion, of virtue, and of peace. An unceasing anxiety with regard to the interests of the young, a little

reading of biography, some observation of characters, and a great deal of conversation with wise and experienced men have led me to this conclusion, that in almost every case, the children of a prudent, intelligent, faithful, virtuous and religious mother become prosperous, happy, and honored in the world; whilst those of a negligent, ignorant, or sinful mother, rarely attain common respectability, and much less eminence or distinction. Doubtless, some exceptions to this general principle might be easily pointed out, but they could not invalidate the testimony of 'the cloud of witnesses,' which might be adduced upon the opposite side of the question. Every person who has carefully looked into the world, with a view of tracing the formation of human character, must be convinced, that the influence of fathers is neither so great nor so extensive. The unhallowed example of many a worthless father has been rendered totally innoxious, by the wisdom and vigilance of a virtuous mother; whilst the most judicious arrangements and the most indefatigable exertions of the best of fathers have been entirely defeated by the perverse and sinful indulgence of weakly, affectionate and imprudent mothers.

Might not this very plain statement enforce a most salutary lesson, with regard to the education of females? From the cradle to the grave, they are the ornament, the solace, and the blessing of man. Our first smile is drawn forth by their tenderness, our returning cares are soothed by their sympathy, and, when sterner natures flee from the chamber of suffering, our latest sigh is answered by their affection. It is principally, however, as being the chief agents in forming the dispositions and characters of the rising generation, that their influence is powerful and

extensive, beyond all calculation. True, they sit not in the senate, but they form the legislators who are to guide the destinies of our country; they preside not upon the bench, and they enter not the jury box, yet the balance and the sword of justice are under their control; they do not ascend the pulpit, but the principles and usefulness of the divine are chiefly of their formation; they engage not in the toils of a profession, or the affairs of trade, but they mould the characters of those, upon whose integrity and talents the happiness of individuals and the prosperity of the nation so materially depend.

I do, then, seriously ask every good and every thinking man, if any education could be too extensive and too solid for human beings engaged in the discharge of such important duties; whose influence pervades the entire frame of society, reaching from the cottage to the palace, and extending in its results from time even to eternity? I know it is urged by many, that the sole business of woman is to regulate her domestic concerns, to promote the comfort of her husband, and to attend to the management of her children; and that, for such purposes, only a small share of learning or knowledge is required. Now the error here, lies not in a mistaken estimate of what are really the principal concerns of woman, (for undoubtedly the domestic circle is the proper sphere both of her usefulness and honor,) but in underrating the qualifications necessary for the faithful and efficient discharge of her important duties. The very regulation of the ordinary affairs of a household must be defective, where here is a want of order, and energy, and information, in he presiding intellect; and it is not easy to conceive ıow the rational enjoyments of an enlightened husband

can possibly be promoted by the society of a wife, in whose tastes and acquirements he can neither find sympathy nor edification. With regard to the management of children, no talents, no endowments can be too high for so important a task. Even in the lowest mechanical employment, the artisan requires to understand the proper use of his implements, and the nature of the materials upon which he is to operate; and surely, a christian mother, whose own mind is either a waste or a wilderness, must be totally unfitted for enlarging the understandings, cultivating the dispositions, regulating the principles, and forming the habits of her offspring. In truth, such a mother is doubly unfitted for her station; first, by incapacity; and again, in being unable to secure that filial reverence and respect, which are essential to the due efficacy of all parental instruction.

Let it not be supposed, however, that I am an enemy to what are termed 'female accomplishments.' On the contrary, I consider them, when moderately and rationally pursued, as eminently calculated to refine the taste and harmonize the feelings of those who possess them, whilst they powerfully tend to sweeten the intercourse of the domestic and friendly circle, to augment the enjoyments of general society, and to cast a sunshine over the gloomy realities of life. Amidst the ten thousand pursuits and cares of the world, the mind and the spirits require relaxation, as well as the body; and the tastes and circumstances of women peculiarly fit them for the acquisition of those accomplishments, which interest the understanding, whilst they soothe the heart. Many a father have I seen, after a toilsome and anxious day, relaxing his brow of care, and considering all his exertions

as more than repaid, whilst, with parental pride, he noted the improvement, or joined in the innocent amusements of his children, and cast a look of gratified affection upon the faithful companion of his life! I know nothing in philosophy, I know nothing in religion, which forbids such feelings and such enjoyments. Yet, I am persuaded, that accomplishments should only be the adjuncts of education, and not its principal business, or its chief end; and, in my mind, there is nothing incompatible between elegance and solidity. On the contrary, I am convinced, that the mind which is most enlarged by the possession of substantial knowledge, is the best calculated to appreciate and to enjoy those less serious branches of education, which tend to cheer and to ornament society. I do not despair of seeing the time, when young females shall consider themselves infinitely better employed in reading the real history of nations, than in perusing volumes of unnatural fiction, which only fills the mind with false ideas, and the heart with injurious feelings — when they shall be no more ashamed of learning ancient than modern languages, or of attending instructions in philosophy which would enlarge their understandings, than of frequenting the gaudy circles of fashion and amusement — when they shall think it more honorable to possess such a knowledge of moral science and the principles of human action and duty, as would render them useful mothers, than to imitate, after years of labor, 'the wing of a butterfly, or the hue of a rose.'

It may be inquired, however, would I educate every woman for a governess? Yes, most assuredly. Every mother is, or at least ought to be, a teacher of the holiest and most interesting kind. Various avocations may pre-

vent her from being a regular instructer, but no earthly consideration should preclude her from being the occasional, nay the frequent teacher of her children. In order that she may be able to act thus, to select proper assistants in the sacred work, to judge of their fidelity in the execution, and to preserve a spirit of energy and zeal, it is absolutely necessary that she should herself possess the requisite qualifications. I care not what may be her station, this is her duty. If her rank be humble, prudence, economy, and a laudable desire to advance her family demand it. If her rank be exalted, many considerations render it still more imperative. Too many, I fear, in affluent circumstances imagine, that because they can afford ample remuneration to competent instructers, they are therefore exempted from all personal attention to the education of their children. No error could be more fatal. In the higher ranks of life, where young persons are perpetually surrounded by fawning and interested flatterers, where the innate vanity and presumption of the human heart are inflamed by indulgence and conscious superiority, no authority less than parental is adequate to restrain the passions, to discipline the principles, to form the habits, and to animate exertion. And, let it be farther considered, that in proportion as the station is exalted, so is the influence of the individual occupying it extended. The happiness of thousands frequently depends upon the disposition and character of a single person. The affluent man, of enlightened piety, humane sentiments, cultivated understanding, and enlarged views of public usefulness, is often the means of diffusing over a wide circle the inestimable blessings of

religion and morality, of industry and prosperity, of cheerfulness and peace. On the other hand, the ignorant and profligate man of wealth, without knowledge or inclination to do good, possessing ample means for the gratification of degrading passions and tyrannical propensities, necessarily becomes a moral pestilence, diffusing the contagion of vice and misery through all the channels of social life around him. Of what peculiar importance is it, therefore, not only for their own honor and happiness, but also for the good of society, that persons occupying influential stations should receive a solid and virtuous education.

The christian mother, who imagines that her rank exempts her from the duties of parental vigilance and instruction, wofully miscalculates the nature of her office; and she who looks upon it as a degradation to become the instructress of her own children, is a total stranger to that which constitutes the highest honor of her sex and station. In the circle of fashion, she may be fair and lovely; her accomplishments may secure the admiration of others, and swell her own heart with vanity: but, after all, such is not the true scene of her genuine interest, and respectability and happiness. The sphere of her substantial, unfading honor lies far away from the crowded haunts of amusement, in a peaceful and secluded apartment of her happy home. There, in the midst of her little ones, she represses the frowardness of one, encourages the diffidence of another, and 'in familiar phrase and adapted story' pours lessons of instruction into the minds of all. With a mother's gentleness, she draws forth their talents; with a mother's firmness, she regulates their tempers;

with a mother's prudence, she prepares them to adorn their station upon earth; and with a mother's piety, she leads them in the onward path towards heaven. The wide expanse of the globe presents no object more interesting, more exalted, or more useful than such a christian parent; nor is there any spot of nature, on which the eye of Omniscience rests with more complacency, than upon the retired and peaceful scene of her virtuous labors. Such a mother becomes the centre of a system of usefulness, of whose extent the imagination can form no adequate conception; for there is not a single worthy principle which she instils, that may not descend as the ornament and solace of ten thousand generations. For my own part, I have always considered parents, who devoted their leisure hours to the instruction of their offspring, as the most estimable and the most useful members of society; and I never could read the story of the Spartan king, who was found by the Persian ambassadors playing in the midst of his children, without looking upon that circumstance as more honorable than all his victories. I do especially believe, that no plan could be devised for elevating the entire frame of society half so efficacious, as that which would produce a succession of well-instructed, judicious and virtuous christian mothers. The laws of the statesman, and the lessons of the divine, would be but feeble instruments of prevention and reformation, in comparison with the hallowed, all-pervading agency of maternal wisdom, energy and affection. Let it not be supposed, however, that I am the advocate of visionary schemes of education. It would neither be practicable nor desirable, for every woman to become deeply learn-

ed; but I would have every female substantially educated, in proportion to her rank, her abilities and her opportunities. This is surely neither unreasonable nor impracticable; and I am persuaded, that in this age of increasing light, it is a subject which will gradually secure a larger portion of public consideration.

The paramount importance of a minute and anxious attention to the principles and habits of the young, naturally suggests the absolute necessity of the strictest vigilance in the selection of domestic servants. In all families, above the very lowest ranks, domestics are necessarily the frequent, and, in many cases, the ordinary companions of children. It is much to be lamented, that the young are seldom admitted to the presence of their parents, except at stated times of formal exhibition and indulgence. They are, therefore, at a period of life, when the mind is perpetually demanding information, and the heart peculiarly susceptible of impressions, thrown almost entirely upon their own resources, or upon the casual assistance of servants. If these be ignorant, they cannot satisfy the cravings of the mind after knowledge; if they be superstitious, they must inspire visionary and enfeebling terrors; and if they be blasphemous or licentious in their language, they necessarily corrupt the principles and habits. Have we not all known melancholy instances, in which the most affectionate and judicious exertions of parents have been totally counteracted, even by the casual association of a profligate domestic? and what must be the fatal consequences, when the young mind is exposed to the perpetual influence of ignorance and immorality? Yet, how seldom do these considerations occur, even in

the engagement of those domestics whose special province is the management of the young! The principal qualifications sought for are, manners, accent, personal neatness, and habits of attention. These, I admit, are all desirable; but what are they, without the accompaniment of religious principles, pure conversation, and a virtuous deportment? Few individuals would be disposed to admit into their families persons who were laboring under a contagious disease, although the calamity could only be temporary, and the utmost penalty, earthly loss: and, yet, how little do they dread the admission of those who may infect the very hearts and spirits of their children with a moral pestilence, equally awful and incurable! For my own part, I solemnly declare, that I would prefer the introduction of a fever into my dwelling, to the residence of a servant, for a single month, in familiar intercourse with my children, whose habits were immoral, and whose conversation was indecent or profane.

The truth is, the best exertions of parents must fail to preserve their offspring uncontaminated, amidst unprincipled and profligate domestics. It, therefore, becomes a matter of the most serious concern to every christian parent, to ascertain the best means of securing a succession of servants, worthy of his confidence and protection. This desideratum can only be obtained, by conferring upon the humbler ranks the means of procuring a reasonable literary education, based upon the solid foundation of religious and moral principles. Every man of affluence, and every man in the middle walks of life, may assist in carrying forward this great work, not merely by his pecuniary contributions, but also by his

countenance and personal exertions in promoting Sunday School instruction. The Lord's day is peculiarly favorable for the inculcation of religious principles; and I know not how the immediate service of God can be more properly preceded or followed, than by acts of beneficence and good-will towards our fellow-creatures. Let it be remembered, too, that our exertions in this holy cause will be like the mercy, so beautifully described by the poet, 'twice blest — blessing him that gives, and him that receives.' Besides 'the luxury of doing good,' we shall receive a solid recompense in the faithful, virtuous, and exemplary domestics, whom we are preparing for ourselves, and our children, and our children's children. Were we, in addition to these instructions, to require of all the inmates of our dwellings a regular attendance upon the stated ordinances of religion, and to associate them with ourselves in our family devotions, we should still farther secure their fidelity and affection.

Yet, after all, we ought to be the principal companions of our own children. It is unnatural, it is criminal, it is destructive, to throw them almost exclusively into the society of those, who must be, at best, but ill qualified, and not much inclined, to be their instructers. Can there be any soil more worthy of our sedulous cultivation, than the minds and the hearts of our own offspring? The period is approaching in which we shall have to render an account for every gift of Providence; and for none shall we be more awfully responsible, than for the immortal souls committed to our care.

If education be of such vast importance, as I have endeavored to demonstrate, every attempt to explain the

most proper method of conducting it is entitled to serious consideration. I proceed, therefore, to make a few plain observations, which may, I trust, under the influence of divine grace, be the means of impressing the minds of some with a deeper sense of duty, and assisting conscientious parents to 'train up their children in the way they should go.'

Good principles being equally the ground-work of all true virtue and of all solid happiness, parents ought very early to impress upon the minds of their offspring an abiding sense of the existence, the presence, and the providence of God, and thus lay the foundation of a religious education. I say, of a religious education; for I am firmly persuaded, that all instruction, which is not connected with the great principles of Christianity, rests upon a basis totally devoid of permanency and security. If parents inculcate the necessity of diligent application, obliging manners, and moral respectability, merely upon the ground of temporal convenience or advantage, their education is like 'the house which was built upon the sand;' for, when the winds and the floods of trial and temptation beat upon it, it will assuredly fall. But an education conducted under the sacred sanctions of religion resembles 'the house which was founded upon a rock;' it will stand secure, a shelter and a home, amidst all the storms and agitation of the world.

I am very far from desiring, however, that young persons should become religious professors, unnatural devotees, or ignorant controversialists. Ridiculous stories of wonderful children have been told, and written, and circulated, to the serious injury of true piety, and the mortification of all sober-minded Christians. Poor young creatures scarcely acquainted with the rudiments of

human learning, and knowing no more of the divine word, than the few passages which they have been taught to repeat in confirmation of some favorite dogma, are often represented as 'understanding all knowledge and all mysteries;' as more competent judges of the sublime doctrines of the Bible, than some of the wisest and the best of men, and as enjoying the immediate 'testimony of the Spirit,' with regard to the truth of their own opinions. Such representations have the most powerful tendency to destroy the natural modesty and ingenuousness of youth, to fill the mind with delusion and the heart with presumption, to encourage false profession, and undermine the very foundations of rational piety. Yet, whilst I feel myself bound to condemn such a pretended and unattainable knowledge of the 'deep things of Heaven' on the part of mere children, I do most strenuously maintain, from my own observation and experience, that they may be very early taught to know that there is a God who made them, who supplies all their wants, who sees all their actions, who is acquainted with all their thoughts, who is pleased with them when they do right, and who is offended when they do evil. We all know, how early imaginary fears may be impressed upon the mind, and how exceedingly difficult it is to efface them, even when they are disowned by the growing reason of succeeding years. In many cases, the highest powers of understanding, and the most profound sentiments of religion, are inadequate to remove them. The celebrated Dr. Johnson, one of the greatest ornaments of English literature, who labored so zealously and so successfully to eradicate moral error from the minds of others, was himself, to the latest hour of his existence, a

slave to the superstitious dread of apparitions! How easy and how salutary a task must it then be, to imbue the mind with the rational and filial fear of God — a fear which grows with the powers of the understanding, and increases with the devout affections of the heart! There is certainly no other sentiment, in the entire range of virtuous feelings, calculated to be so powerfully and so permanently influential on human conduct, as a reverential and abiding sense of the constant presence and providence of the Supreme Being. Even before the eyes of their fellow-mortals, men are deterred from committing acts of indecency and criminality; and surely, if they could be induced seriously to consider, that the eye of Omniscience is the perpetual witness of all their thoughts, and desires, and actions, the most powerful barrier would be erected against the inroads of all impiety and immorality. It appears to be upon this principle, that 'the fear of the Lord' is so emphatically called in Scripture, 'the beginning of wisdom;' and therefore it is a matter of the highest importance, to ascertain in what manner a sentiment so valuable may be most effectually attained. All men are agreed with regard to the period of life, at which this important principle ought to be inculcated. 'Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth,' is a precept received with universal approbation. But, whilst this perfect accordance of opinion exists with respect to the paramount importance of endeavoring to infuse principles of piety into the human mind at a very early period of existence, there is by no means the same agreement of sentiment as to the best means of accomplishing so desirable an end. I shall not occupy time, by examining the various opinions

which have been advanced upon this subject, but content myself with explaining a very simple method, which, from experience, I would recommend as efficacious in raising the minds and the affections, even of very young persons, to the glorious Author of all good.

It may be safely laid down as an incontrovertible position, that the mere use of words, how proper soever in themselves, to which the person employing them attaches no meaning, can never have the smallest influence, either upon the heart or the understanding; and I think it is equally evident, that no external form or ceremony, the design and tendency of which are totally incomprehensible, can in any degree accomplish the object for which it was instituted. Let us apply these plain principles to the ordinary method of inculcating early sentiments of reverence towards the Deity. The child is compelled to kneel down at its mother's knee, to assume a grave countenance, to join its little hands in form of devotion, to repeat words of which it no more comprehends the meaning than if they were Hebrew, and to go through an irksome ceremony, from day to day, with a listless heart and an uninterested mind. Is it any wonder that, under such a system, the poor child should so often cast its eyes from object to object, or that it should become intolerably drowsy, or that it should manifest innumerable symptoms of uneasiness, while it repeats a task which it learned with no feeling but that of pain? Is not such a system, I would ask, eminently calculated to defeat the very end which it desires to promote, and to associate the service of God, in the mind of the child, with feelings directly opposed to those of reverence and devotion?

Nor is it a less injurious plan, when children are a little farther advanced, to attempt instructing them in the general principles of Christianity, by requiring them to commit, as an irksome task, volumes of hymns and books of scripture — in which drudgery the memory is, almost universally, the only faculty employed. If to these we add the consideration, that these painful exercises are usually connected with the Lord's day, we perceive the completion of a system, preeminently adapted to render the Bible anything but 'a pleasure,' and the Sabbath anything but 'a delight.' Surely, it is as impolitic as it is unjust to make religion thus appear to the youthful mind, as if it were unfriendly to happiness, and to connect its principles and ordinances with unprofitable labor and painful sacrifices. Such a mode of instruction has a natural tendency to destroy the feelings of genuine piety, to produce a constrained and hypocritical profession for a season, and to terminate in eventual infidelity. I have known several instances of such a melancholy progress, in the children of sincerely pious, but excessively rigid parents. This circumstance amply proves, how delicate a task it is to regulate the human mind; to preserve the proper medium between a criminal neglect, which would permit evil propensities to grow without control, and an injudicious severity of discipline, that would create a rebellious impatience of restraint, and an insatiable craving for the cup of forbidden pleasure. I am fully persuaded, that such a happy medium can only be attained, by making religious education an affair of the heart and the understanding, instead of a mere matter of words, or formal profession, or abstract theory.

I would therefore teach the first lessons of piety to the young, in the fair and glorious book of Nature. I would lead them through the cultivated fields, and the pleasant pastures, and the flowery meadows, and the leafy groves. When the husbandman casts his seed into the bosom of the earth, when the green blade springs forth, and when the ripe ear yields abundance, I would show them the providence of God, in the mode of supplying their daily wants. When they listened with joy to the music of the groves, when they looked with delight on the peaceful cattle feeding upon the green pastures, when they remarked the industry of the bee, or the sportive fluttering of the butterfly, or the happiness of the myriads of beings that were enjoying existence in the air, in the waters, or upon the earth, I would lead them to consider the infinite goodness of God, in the diffusion of such unbounded enjoyment. In the refreshing breeze, the reviving shower, and the animating sun; in the formation of every tree, and plant, and flower, as well as of every animated being, I would lead them to admire the transcendent wisdom of their Creator. And when the dews of evening should begin to fall, when they were returning to their peaceful homes with invigorated bodies and joyous spirits, I would point to the fair moon, rising in tranquil beauty, and to one star after another, appearing in the glorious firmament of heaven; and I would lead them to reverence the power and majesty of Him, who had formed all the starry worlds which they beheld, and who had, no doubt, also peopled them with inhabitants! At the season of refreshment I would remind them, by the devout expression of my own gratitude, and by recalling to their recollection what they had themselves witnessed, to whom they were

indebted for all their comforts and blessings. When the hour of repose drew near, I would kneel down in the midst of my children, as every christian parent is bound to do; I would praise my Creator for all his mercies, supplicate a continuation of his bounties, and fervently implore him to bless my little ones. And when they afterwards addressed their 'Father in Heaven' in personal prayer, before retiring to rest, they would no longer offer a heartless and a mindless service; they would know whom they worshipped, and feel why they ought to be grateful. Thus, might the hearts of the young become truly interested in the cause of religion, and imbued with the sacred odour of piety, which would ever retain its freshness, although they should be broken by the shocks of misfortune, or withered by the winter of age.

I know it may be said by many, that what I have been advancing is all visionary and theoretical; but I am not afraid of its being so considered by the wise and the experienced, who have carefully studied human nature, and observed the progress of the human mind. Children think much sooner, and much more accurately, than most persons imagine. Indeed, fond and partial parents are always sensible of this in their own offspring. They are quite delighted with their shrewd remarks, and often astonished and puzzled by their curious questions; but they take it for granted that these are only indications of extraordinary talents in their own children, and that all others are comparatively ignorant and uninteresting, This, however, is a mere error of parental partiality; for the mass of other children are fully equal to their own; and all are much more, and much earlier the objects of religious and moral culture than is generally believed.

Their ignorance of language is the principal barrier in the way of their instruction. They are often unable to find words to explain their own ideas, and we have usually as much difficulty in selecting terms suited to give them a proper conception of ours. Yet, it is wonderful, how much knowledge, especially with regard to external objects, they may acquire, under moderately judicious treatment, where affection never loses patience in consequence of their unceasing interrogatories, and where a sound discretion adapts the language of explanation to the extent of their capacities. No more fatal mistake could be made in the treatment of children, than repressing their curiosity by refusing to answer their questions. An inquisitive disposition ought to be particularly encouraged, as it opens the most favorable inlet for knowledge at a very early period of life. The information which a child desires to obtain always affords it pleasure, and usually makes a permanent impression upon its mind; whilst, on the contrary, knowledge which is pressed upon it by others is generaly received with indifference, and soon passes away. Many questions put by children may be trifling, many absurd, and many difficult to be answered; but the very reply of a judicious parent to a frivolous interrogatory may be so framed, as to correct an error of judgment, and the most difficult question should receive an answer, if possible; or, at the very least, a satisfactory reason should be assigned for refusing a reply. In every thing connected with religious principles and impressions, it is peculiarly important that this course should be pursued. If a child inquire, (and what child does not?) who made the sun, and the moon, and the stars — who formed the mountains, and the rivers, and

the beasts of the field — who created himself, and his parents, and all other human beings — would it not be the utmost fatuity, to omit so favorable an opportunity of inculcating the first and most influential principle of all religion — the existence, the power, and the providence of God? That this great principle may be inculcated, and that an abiding conviction of the constant presence of the Deity may be impressed upon the mind, at a very early period of life, I do aver from experience; and in this sentiment, I am convinced I shall have the concurrence of every judicious parent, and of every man who has attentively considered the tendencies of human nature.

This habitual reverence of the Supreme Being will be materially strengthened in the minds of the young, by conducting them regularly to the public services of religion, and thus associating all their previous sentiments of piety with the hallowed solemnities of the sanctuary, and the deliberate approbation of the wise and good. Parents, who neglect the private and public duties of the Lord's day, who spend it in drowsy indifference, or degrade it into a season of worldly occupation or vain amusement, cannot expect that the love and fear of God should be established in the hearts of their children. These essential principles of piety, these surest foundations of moral respectability, are never to be found in the lukewarm and careless spirit; and what the father possesses not in himself, he cannot communicate to his son. For my own part, I have almost universally observed, that the decay of vital religion, in individuals and families, has exactly kept pace with their neglect of religious institutions. This is peculiarly true with regard to the young, who have no counterpoise for their

thoughtlessness and folly, save what is to be found in the habitual reverence of God. Christian parents, therefore, who omit to lead their children to the sanctuary, neglect to furnish them with the most powerful defence against all the trials and all the temptations of the world.

The reading of the holy scriptures is another most effectual means of promoting a religious and moral education. They contain the charter of our salvation, the grounds of our duty, the objects of our faith, and the anchor of our hopes. They are a treasure of inestimable value to all, but especially to the young, who most require the instruction of divine wisdom. Without a knowledge of the sacred records all education must be defective. But, whilst 'all scripture, given by inspiration of God, is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness,' the moral law, the prophecies, and the devotional parts of the Old Testament, with the whole of the christian revelation, are peculiarly adapted for the edification of the young. I do not say, that every part of the divine word is not calculated to afford salutary instruction to minds which are prepared to receive it; but, in the ceremonial law and the historical books of the Old Testament there are several things which appear to me but little suited to the capacities and feelings of youth. These I would leave for the consideration of riper years, and direct the mind principally to the dispensation of 'the glorious gospel of the grace of God.' Nor would I impose even this as an irksome task and fatiguing drudgery. I would not insist upon children's committing large portions of the New Testament to memory, lest I should create disgust and aversion, where I only desire to promote admiration and respect.

The injudicious system of enforcing a literal repetition of scripture, as a regular school-task, and sometimes as a penalty for idleness or misconduct, is pre-eminently calculated to destroy the very rudiments of piety in the human heart. This mischievous error has arisen from a misconception of the true nature of religion; from making it a concern merely of words and ideas, whereas in reality it is especially an affair of the affections; for 'it is the heart which God requires.' I would not thus attempt to instruct the young in a knowledge of the sacred volume; but, when they had previously considered and read a certain portion, I would question them with regard to its contents, and thus move onward in regular succession, with frequent reference to previous information, until the substance of the gospel should be engraven on their minds, and the spirit of the gospel infused into their hearts. Knowledge and feelings thus acquired would not vanish, like mere impressions of the memory, but would permanently remain as the guides and consolations of life, associated in the mind with pleasurable recollections. Besides, young persons educated on such a system would generally be steady in their religious principles. Having once drunk 'the waters of life' from the pure fountain of the divine word, they could scarcely turn to the polluted streams of human invention in after years.

As 'the chief corner stone' of a religious education, the minds of the young should be very frequently directed towards our blessed Saviour. They may not be able to appreciate all his labors of love, to understand all his divine instructions, to comprehend all the gracious purposes of his death, and resurrection, and mediation; but I know that, at a very early age, they may become truly

interested in his character and sufferings. I have seen the cheeks of an intelligent child suffused with tears, whilst reading the indignities of the judgment-hall, and the awful sufferings of Calvary. And, when the heart is thus impressed, every word from the lips of the gracious Being, who has become such an object of affectionate interest, is received with reverence and respect..

In the important work of early religious instruction parents must necessarily be the principal agents; but their labors acquire an additional efficacy, when they are aided by the ministers of the gospel. In the estimation of the young, there is always a sacredness attached to the ministerial character, which gives weight and energy to instruction; and I am fully persuaded that the faithful servant of Christ does not occupy so high a station of usefulness, even whilst he is delivering the holiest truths from the pulpit, as when he is engaged in the humble task of impressing lessons of wisdom and virtue upon the youthful mind. By such unostentatious labors he conciliates affection, prepares the soil for the good seed which he is afterwards to sow, and, independently of all higher considerations, secures an abundant harvest of respect and honor for his coming years. He may devote his mind to study, he may acquire the reputation of learning, or piety, or eloquence, and he may become an eminent preacher of righteousness; but, at the close of his mortal career, he will assuredly look back upon the peaceful hours, which he dedicated to the familiar instruction of the young, as by far the most profitable of his whole existence. A minister of the gospel who neglects this sacred duty, though he possesses the eloquence and the knowledge of a Paul, is still 'but as sounding brass,

or a tinkling cymbal.' He leaves the parents without encouragement or assistance, the children without knowledge, or motives to acquire it; and even his religious opinions, of which he boasts as having the peculiar sanction of truth, depend entirely for their extension upon the operations of chance, or the formal harangues of the pulpit. The work of the Lord cannot prosper in such hands; the canker-worm of indifference must gradually consume the very vitals of religion; and those who commence the career of life without religious principles, will almost invariably continue it without moral practice. The ministers of the gospel, therefore, are peculiarly bound, by the most sacred and awful responsibility, to watch over the education of the rising generation; to aid and encourage parents in the diligent discharge of their arduous duties; and to diffuse around them the invaluable blessings of an early piety.

Religious sentiments, however, ought never to be inculcated as mere abstract principles. They should be constantly associated in the mind with moral feelings, and the active discharge of moral duties. Wanting this connexion, they are as a tree without fruit. The guardians of the young, therefore, should constantly labor to associate the filial fear of God with a reverence for his commandments, and the love of the Saviour with good-will towards mankind. The important relative duties of integrity and truth, of generosity and kindness, of forgiveness and charity, ought to be enforced as the very end and essence of true religion. Above all things, the prevalent and degrading vice of falsehood should be carefully repressed, as offensive to God, destructive to the peace of society, and disgraceful to themselves. No

exertion, no vigilance, on the part of parents, can be too great to secure an inward love and habitual observance of truth. Where this great virtue is wanting, all other honorable principles must be deficient; and wherever it is to be found, we may confidently look for its natural attendants, integrity and benevolence. Kind and considerate treatment is always the most likely to secure the interests of truth: for I am persuaded that all falsehood has its origin in fear — the fear of punishment, or disapprobation. I would, therefore, pardon almost any folly or offence, not involving gross impiety or moral turpitude, in order to secure a habit of candor and veracity.

Next to the social virtues, those of a more immediately personal character may be very early inculcated; and upon these a large portion of human happiness necessarily depends. No period of life, above mere infancy, is too early for teaching self-denial and patience of control. Thousands of the hot and ungovernable spirits, that have brought sorrow upon themselves, and inflicted miseries upon others, owe their misfortunes and their crimes to uncorrected passions, and unsubdued peevishness of temper, in the very earliest stages of existence. The same wisdom of experience, which prevents a child from thrusting its hand a second time into a flame, would, under proper management, prevent it from indulging in violent bursts of passion. And I am persuaded, (for I have witnessed the fact,) that children might be almost as easily taught to refrain from tasting forbidden sweets by a salutary fear of incurring displeasure, as to avoid the repetition of actions accompanied by personal suffering.

But it may be inquired — if it be so easy a task to teach those early lessons of piety, morality, and self-restraint, why are not young persons universally trained up in such salutary habits? I answer — because some parents are criminally negligent, others injudiciously rigorous, many culpably indulgent, and almost all mistaken with regard to what ought to be the grand object of human pursuits.

It is much to be lamented that many persons, in all ranks of society, are criminally indifferent with respect to the principles and education of their children. This, however, is especially the case at the two extremes of the social scale. The lowest classes, fatigued with daily toil, harassed with returning wants, destitute of all the nobler aspirings of nature, and too frequently ignorant of the inestimable advantages of religious and moral culture, are contented if they can supply their children with the coarsest fare and scanty raiment. They have never themselves risen above the station in which they were born; they anticipate no higher destiny for their children; and they do not imagine that any very extensive endowments, either intellectual or moral, are necessary to the success of mere manual industry. Such persons are much more the objects of compassion than of censure, but the same palliation cannot be offered for the conduct of those in the other extreme of society, who are too often equally neglectful. Occupied with the enjoyments or the vanities of life, they too frequently commit the entire care of their offspring to mercenary hands; they are content with occasional reports of their progress, and rest satisfied that all must be well, when they are passing through the ordinary routine of fashionable education.

The minds of their children may remain a comparative blank, whilst their hearts are over-run with the rank weeds of irreligion and vice; and thus, those who are to influence the destinies of thousands are, not unfrequently, amongst the worst educated men in the community. Honorable exceptions to this statement, I am well aware, may easily be found, where persons of the highest rank are remarkably distinguished for their parental fidelity; but these exceptions are not of ordinary occurrence, and cannot invalidate the general rule.

Excessive rigor and injudicious severity on the part of parents are less common, but not less certain sources of irreligious feeling and immoral practice. Whilst some persons are so weakly affectionate as to perceive no failings in their children, others are so unnaturally harsh as to see nothing but imperfections. Influenced by an overweening vanity, they desire to see their children superior to all others, and are therefore subjected to incessant chagrin. Disappointed in their talents, discontented with their progress, and irritated because they want the polish of the world and the steadiness of age, they cast the blame of their own absurd mortification upon their unoffending offspring. With a wild impatience and tyranny, they demand exertions beyond their strength, expect a gravity beyond their years, refuse the most salutary indulgencies, and, if they happen to be what is termed religious, exact a formality of devotion equally unnatural and absurd. The inevitable result of such a system is, that their children view them with terror instead of affection, hate those studies which are the perpetual sources of sorrow, endeavor to deceive those whom they cannot propitiate, and turn hypocrites in re-

ligion to avoid the penalty of sincerity. The perverted ingenuity of man could devise no plan of education more destructive of all piety and morality. The moment that a young person so educated is set free from the fetters with which he has been bound, and escapes from the unnatural tyranny by which he has been enslaved, he is prepared to give the reins to every passion, and to cast all religious and moral restraint to the winds.

It must be admitted, however, that culpable indulgence is a much more prevalent source of erroneous education, than that which I have just described. The natural, the laudable desire of the parental heart is, to confer happiness. Youth requires indulgence, and it would be equally barbarous and unwise to refuse it. Judicious kindness is the best instrument of human instruction; it calls forth all the native tendencies of the heart; nothing is hidden from the eye of affection. The entire character lies open to inspection; so that every virtuous tendency may be encouraged, and every vicious propensity restrained. To parental indulgence, therefore, I would prescribe no limits but those which would render it truly conducive to the happiness of its object. Now let it be considered, that in making a due estimate of happiness we must view the whole course of human life. We should never call that conducive to man's happiness, which afforded him the enjoyment of a day at the heavy cost of miserable years. Upon this principle, the gratification of every appetite and desire on the part of the young, is but a wretched preparation for the vicissitudes of the world. In the busy haunts of men, every hand will not bring supplies like that of a gentle mother, nor every voice speak kindness like that of an indulgent

father. The unfortunate being, whose will has never been controlled, whose passions have never been restrained, is but ill suited for the conflicts of this selfish and bustling scene. I shall go farther, however, and say, that even in youth such an individual is never happy. I have always looked upon the poor child as an object of compassion, whose craving desires were most freely gratified. The wealth of the Indies, and all the ingenuity of man, could not supply its increasing demands. After exhausting all possible sources of gratification, its imagination would become its tormentor; and the object of ten thousand indulgencies would be only a peevish and miserable creature. On the other hand, the child, whose unreasonable desires have been restrained, whose temper and passions have been subdued, to whom indulgence has been sometimes extended and sometimes refused, is uniformly cheerful and contented; a gratification withheld inflicts no pain, a favor conferred communicates real pleasure. It is evident, therefore, that a mind which has been weakened, and a heart which has been perverted by excessive indulgence, never can become the seat of manly thought, or generous sentiment.

To all other causes which impede the progress of a salutary education, may be added the mistaken estimate, too generally formed, of what ought to be the grand objects of human pursuit. I do not say, that upon this subject men make any serious mistake in theory, or in words, or in profession; all admit, that piety and virtue should be the primary objects of human desire. But what say their actions? Is it to the attainment of these that they principally direct the education of their children? On the contrary, have not all their exertions an

undivided view to the interests and enjoyments of the world? What efforts are constantly made, with respect to mere temporal instruction, to manners, to accomplishments, and to placing them on the road of fortune and reputation! These, I admit, are all desirable, but they should not be the chief objects sought for in education. We are expressly commanded by our blessed Lord, 'to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,' under the sacred assurance, that if we do so, 'all other necessary good things will be added unto us.' I shall, therefore, bring this discourse to a conclusion, by addressing a plain and brief exhortation to parents upon the important subject of their relative duties.

Christian parents, I address myself to you, most earnestly beseeching you to remember the awful responsibility of the parental character. The interests of time and of eternity hang upon your conduct. The children whom God has given you are the most sacred and valuable trust, which he could have committed to your care. With their lot your own is likewise cast. Should they, through your virtuous exertions, as the humble instruments of the grace of God, 'be raised to glory, and honor, and eternal life,' you also 'shall have your crown of rejoicing;' but if, through your neglect or criminality, they should go down to sorrow, 'then will their blood be required at your hands!' O, my fellow christians, what an awful consideration is this! You would stand at the bed of their earthly suffering with afflicted hearts, and mourn even under the dispensation of Providence; — with what feelings, then, would you contemplate the misery of their immortal souls, and look upon yourselves as the guilty cause of

all their sorrows! I beseech you, brethren, by all the promises and all the threatenings of the divine word, to address yourselves diligently to the transcendently important duties of your station. In so sacred a cause indifference is crime. Let not their minds and their hearts remain without instruction; but whilst you inculcate the sublime principles of the gospel, let religion appear to them in all her native loveliness, as a gracious angel of purity and peace. Let no harshness of language, no austerity of manner, no unnatural exactions on your part, lead them to look upon piety as unfriendly to their happiness. Show them rather, that religion checks no decent joy, forbids no innocent pleasure. Make it your rational and delightful task,

> 'To try each art, reprove each fond delay,
> Allure to brighter worlds, and lead the way.'

But, whilst you manifest your christian spirit and temper by all becoming acts of reasonable kindness, never forget that religion gives no sanction to those criminal indulgences, which corrupt the heart and degrade the character. It is natural, it is laudable, it is useful to be indulgent; it is even right, perhaps, not to appear to observe trifling faults and follies, involving no depravity of principle, and leading to no injurious results; but, wherever the gratification of an appetite or a desire might lead, even in its remote consequences, to destructive habits or immoral actions, the firmest resistance should be maintained. It is chiefly from mothers, that undue indulgence is to be apprehended. Beneficently gifted by the Deity with a stronger portion of natural affection, to sustain them in the discharge of

the irksome and important duties which devolve upon them, they can scarcely be blamed for an excess of tenderness; although it is our bounden duty to warn them of its consequences. I would ask, then, any christian mother, why she often withholds correction, which she believes to be necessary, and indulges with gratifications, which she knows to be injurious? Her probable answer would be—that she cannot bear the idea of inflicting pain upon a creature that is so dear to her heart! But, were her child laboring under a dangerous disease, would she not administer the most nauseous medicine, or subject it to the most painful operation, in order to restore it to health and soundness? Or, suppose that it clamored for some sweet, that was mingled with a deadly poison, would she gratify its palate at the expense of its life? No; in such cases, she would not only judge correctly, but also act rightly. And is the case less urgent or less important, because her child only labors under a moral distemper, or because he only desires to enjoy a momentary gratification, which will poison his mind and corrupt his heart? Surely, every argument, which would influence her in the instance of bodily suffering, or the refusal of the poisoned dainty, ought to have a thousand fold the force in the case of moral disease, or moral contagion. Just in proportion to the difference between body and soul, time and eternity, should be her serious estimate of her maternal duty. Never ought she to shrink, in destructive weakness, from a prompt obedience to the command of scripture: 'Withhold not correction from thy child; if thou beatest him with a rod he will not die, and thou mayest thereby deliver his soul from destruction.' The

pain of a moment may save him from years of suffering; and the unwarrantable indulgence of an hour may be followed by ages of remorse!

The malignity of a demon could devise no system more destructive to virtue and happiness, than one often generated in the fond heart of a mother; I refer to the deeply culpable practice of concealing the offences of children from the knowledge of their fathers, and the still more criminal custom of supplying them in secret with the means of frivolous or sensual gratification. Were a mother to place a dagger in the hands of her son, to be turned against his own breast, she would be arming him with a much less dangerous weapon, than a supply of money for purposes of riot and debauchery. By such disastrous means, millions of young persons have been overwhelmed with destruction. And yet, unfortunate mothers, who practice these things, often complain of the ingratitude of their children, and wonder that they do not love them more, and respect them more! Now, the only wonder to me is, that such mothers should expect any return of gratitude or affection. After having corrupted their children from infancy by ruinous indulgence; after having taught them hypocrisy and fraud by their own example; after having put the poisoned cup of sensuality and crime into their very hands — it would be amazing, if they entertained towards them any other sentiments than those of contempt and aversion. The very indulgences, upon which they rest as a ground of affection, have destroyed all the native and amiable sensibilities of the heart. I do not recollect having seen, in the whole course of my life, a weakly and indiscriminately indulgent mother, sin-

cerely respected and beloved by her children; but I have known many, who have been repaid for their injudicious kindness by heart-rending neglect or insult. The firm and prudent mother alone, who has the good sense to unite general kindness with occasional and salutary restraint, becomes an object of permanent respect and affection. Her tenderness is justly appreciated, because it is considered as a proof of approbation, and not as a mere thoughtless instinctive impulse; and even her very denial of hurtful gratification is accompanied by a manner and an explanation eminently calculated to enforce conviction and secure esteem. Such a mother walks amidst her children as an object of affectionate reverence, an equitable distributor of rewards and punishments; from whose justice, propriety of conduct is always secure of a recompense, and from whose weakness, criminality cannot speculate upon impunity.

If there be anything, which, above all other considerations, I would press upon parents with peculiar earnestness, it is this — that, in the management of children, there should be no apparent diversity of opinion or system between father and mother. Wherever such difference exists, it is uniformly destructive; the judgment of each parent being alternately undervalued, and the authority of both too often eventually undermined. It usually happens, indeed, in such cases, that a wretched system of deceit and tyranny springs into existence. The mother frequently encourages or connives at actions, of which the father disapproves; concealment or apology is therefore her object, whilst detection and punishment are his. Such a course once begun, action and re-action mutually increase the evil.

The more the father is deceived, he becomes the more severe; and in proportion as his severity increases, the mother redoubles, in concert with the child, her efforts of deception. Thus, both parents sin against nature; the one is fostering folly and hypocrisy, the other is becoming a tyrant. The child, too, is eventually taught to sin against nature — to despise one parent, and to hate another. And, what is equally deplorable, the mutual affection and confidence of the parents themselves are impaired; and that very being, who ought to be the most sacred bond of union, often becomes a source of division and alienation. Whatever diversity of opinion, therefore, may happen to exist between fathers and mothers, it should be entirely settled or compromised in private, that the slightest symptom of it may not appear before their children. A divided authority is always weak; and there can be no case in which it is more destructive, for 'a house to be divided against itself,' than in the education of the young. Parental wisdom should never be doubted, parental impartiality should never be suspected, parental authority should never be the subject of dispute. If a mother be too indulgent, let there be a private admonition; if a father be too severe, there ought to be a secret remonstrance. Even where a restraint may have been tyrannical, or a punishment inflicted beyond due bounds, there should never be a sudden and repentant relaxation. Such alternate rigor and relenting are exceedingly common, and exceedingly mischievous. The boy hates a power that is exercised without reason, speculates upon undue indulgence as a recompense for unmerited suffering, and looks upon himself rather

as the victim of his father's improper passion, than as the object of a just and necessary correction. To prevent such consequences, it is the part of true wisdom to follow the gentler suggestions of nature; and to keep always rather within than beyond the bounds of rigorous justice.

You are no doubt anxious, my christian friends, to establish your children in circumstances of worldly competence and respectability. This is a natural, a laudable, a religious desire. An honest independence is one of the greatest blessings of existence. It enables a man to walk amidst his fellows, of whatever rank, with a firm step, a manly aspect, and a tranquil heart. It affords him the means of moderate, rational, and decent enjoyment, both in his individual and social capacity; and, what is still more, it enables him to 'taste the luxury of doing good.' But, let it ever be remembered, that even this valuable independence should never be purchased by sacrifices or exertions, which would raise a blush upon the cheek, or excite a pang in the heart. If you can exalt your children to affluence and station by honorable means, whilst you impress those sound principles of religion and morality, which will enable them to enjoy and to improve the blessings of their lot, you become not merely the benefactors of your families, but also of your kind. If, however, it be your sole object to confer affluence upon them for its own sake, without any attention to the dispositions and virtues which would render it a source of personal and public advantage, you would more consult their substantial interest and happiness by placing them in the humblest

condition of honest industry. I solemnly declare that I would rather bequeath to my child the honorable inheritance of good principles and a good name, than 'millions of silver and gold' with an ungoverned spirit, or a corrupted heart. We all know the uncertainty of reputation, and fortune, and power. We farther know that were they even permanent in their own nature, they have not the capacity of conferring virtue or happiness. On the contrary, they have a natural tendency to render the heart presumptuous, to inflame the passions, and to foster crime. Neither can they ward off the stroke of disease, nor the shafts of calamity. In the gloomy hour of dissolution, 'when the heart sinks, and the spirits fail, and there is no pleasure in life,' they cannot afford one gleam of hope, or one moment of consolation. Under such circumstances, how different is the lot of him, who has been educated with sound principles of piety and morality! With regard to all his true interests, he is entirely independent of the chances and changes of the world; and even in the last solemn hour, the light of a good conscience and the staff of christian hope cheer and sustain his spirit, as he journeys 'through the valley of the shadow of death,' to a better country and a Father's home.

In conclusion, christian parents, if you desire that your children should be duly guided by your instructions, show them in all things the sincerity and value of your precepts, by their happy influence upon your own lives and conversation.' Example is the most agreeable and the most powerful instructer. As they learn your language, copy your manners, and acquire your

habits of thinking upon ordinary subjects, so will they become imbued with your christian temper and principles. But, remember, if you 'walk not worthy of the high vocation wherewith you are called,' your example must be destructive, and you can no longer be objects of affection or respect. Do not force your children to err against nature. No child can love a tyrant, a sensualist, a despiser of religion, or a neglecter of parental duties. Walk in the midst of your families, in the constant exercise of kindness tempered with firmness, of piety without austerity, of holiness adorned by cheerfulness, and you cannot fail, in the virtues and happiness of your children, to reap an abundant harvest of joy and peace.

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PREJUDICE.

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ON PREJUDICE.

Can there any thing good come out of Nazareth?

The hasty conclusion, implied in this question of Nathaniel, was suggested by his prejudices; and it proved to be, like most other hasty conclusions, a mistake. The belief that the Messiah would appear, surrounded by all the splendor of a victorious king, was so fixed in the mind of this Jew, that when Philip told him the long-expected one had come in the person of Jesus, the reputed son of Joseph the carpenter, of the despised village of Nazareth, the prejudices of Nathaniel were at once violently shocked. He revolted at a story so new, and, as he hastily thought, so unreasonable and derogatory. The exclamation of astonishment and contempt burst involuntarily from his lips — 'can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?'

But it should ever be remembered, in justice to this Israelite, and as worthy of all praise and imitation, that he did not allow his prejudices to triumph over his love of truth. He had the candor to go to Nazareth, and see for himself the man, who was said to be the Christ. He saw, he conversed with Jesus. His prepossessions

vanished, and, with the ardor of unfeigned conviction, he acknowledged him. 'Rabbi thou art the son of God — thou art the king of Israel.'

Such hasty conclusions, as Nathaniel formed at first, are formed every day; but unhappily they are not, like his, corrected. No. Men indulge their prejudices — indulge them fearlessly, suffer themselves to be influenced by them habitually, without taking any pains to ascertain whether they are reasonable or not. And such indulgence tends directly to diminish the vigor of the understanding, to impair the power of discerning truth, and to make us the easy prey of deluded or designing persons. It is true we must have prejudices, that is, sentiments in favor or disfavor of everything about which there may be two opinions, until we have had time carefully to inquire and consider. This is unavoidable, and therefore not wrong. But it is wrong, greatly wrong, to assume the entire correctness of our sentiments on any subject, before we have given to it all the consideration, and made every inquiry respecting it, which our circumstances will permit. Especially unjust and unjustifiable is it, before we have thus investigated the truth of our own opinions, to venture the condemnation of any individual, or sect, or party, that may differ from us.

It is, however, I apprehend, in respect to opposing sentiments on subjects of the greatest moment, that men are most apt to decide hastily, and to feel bitterly, without sufficient knowledge of facts or circumstances. Hence the word prejudice is generally used in a bad sense, meaning an unfavorable opinion of persons, practices or principles, concerning which the individual,

expressing or entertaining the opinion, has had no opportunity, or has taken no pains to be thoroughly informed. Under the influence of such prejudice, we continually hear decisions strongly expressed against the propriety of men's conduct, the correctness of their sentiments, and even against the purity of their intentions. We hear it affirmed, without the least hesitation, that in such opinions there can be nothing true, for such conduct no apology, in such characters nothing good.

Cherished prejudice is apt to become unrelenting and violent. It is frequently restrained by no consideration of the rights or feelings of others. It seems to be blind and deaf. It refuses to be convinced by any exposition of facts, or array of arguments, and often every effort to arrest it serves only to increase its fury. The history of religion and politics is, on many of its pages, but a sad detail of the cruel devastations, which prejudices have wrought upon the peace and comfort of society. It has generally been by setting these at work, that ignorant fanatics and unprincipled demagogues have overborne, or endeavored to overbear those, who have dared to oppose their measures, or dissent from their opinions. And sometimes even religionists and politicians, who have no doubt heartily intended to promote truth and the good of mankind, have ventured to attempt the correction of error, by exciting the public prejudices against those, who have been known or believed to maintain it. But this has ever proved a disastrous expedient. For prejudice can never be limited in its operation, precisely to the purpose it may have been called out to accomplish. Like a river breaking over

its banks, there is danger it will overwhelm, without distinction, what is useful no less than what is noxious — lay waste rather than cleanse the tract, over which it passes — perhaps sweep away in its course all the pride of the fields, the fruits of cultivation, the scanty subsistence of the poor no less than the abundance of the rich, and leave behind it one wide waste of desolation and ruin. How obvious is it, that an agent, which does in this manner confound the distinctions of right and wrong, which cannot discriminate between the good and the bad, ought never to be employed for any purpose by the friends of truth, of order, of religion.

It behooves every one, if he would not be made the blind instrument of injustice, oppression, cruelty, to bear in mind that he is *individually* responsible for his conduct and his feelings, though he may act under the sanction of a powerful sect or party. He will not be justified at the tribunal of heaven, in denouncing a man or a body of men, merely because others denounce them. He must know the reason why he should join the cry of condemnation. He must be fully persuaded in his own mind, that these reasons are good and sufficient; and that the opinion or conduct in question is such, in fact or in tendency, as to render the person or persons unworthy or unsound members of the christian, or civil community. And surely he ought not to venture upon such an unfavorable conclusion respecting any one, until he has gone through a thorough, candid, charitable investigation of the matter alleged; excepting only in a case, where the charges are sustained by self-evidence. Our courts of law consider those, who are accused of the foulest crimes, as entitled to a fair hearing before

they are to be excluded from the society or confidence of their fellow men. And is not a man entitled to the same fair dealing from the community and every member of it, when his reputation and usefulness are assailed by public reports, or secret insinuations? Because my neighbor differs from me in religious opinion, or is engaged to promote any political measure, which I oppose, am I at liberty to believe whatever may be said against him, especially what others of my own sect or party may say? And although I may be really zealous in the cause of religious truth, or may ardently desire the good of my country, am I any the more to be justified in forming hasty decisions against the opinions, or motives, or actions of those, who do not think or act in concert with me. Certainly not, unless I can know myself to be infallible in judgment, unerring in temper and conduct. Though all about me denounce an individual or a sect, I may not do so too; unless I am fully persuaded, after honest examination, that the denunciation, is merited, and that the cause of truth, liberty or religion demands of me to utter the denunciation. If we forget our individual responsibleness in this matter, and suppose we may safely unite to censure or despise those, whom others censure or despise, we shall often be grossly mistaken, and, what is worse, shall often be guilty of the grossest injustice and cruelty.

In order that we may be duly on our guard against prejudice, we ought to be aware, how readily the mind conceives it, and by what it is generated. Let us turn our thoughts on this inquiry a moment.

The worst source of prejudice, but I hope not the most common, is an uncharitable temper. Resentment,

envy, pride, selfishness, irritability, suspicion, emulation — these feelings, more or fewer of which go to constitute an uncharitable temper of greater or less malignity, all and each render us ready to believe or quick to imagine evil of another. Where the temper is a compound of most of these feelings, the prejudices which arise in the mind are not easily corrected, for the obvious reason that the possessor does not wish to part with them. He thinketh evil of his neighbor, because he loves so to do. He rejoiceth in iniquity, because perhaps he imagines that his own worth will rise in the community, in proportion as that of another is depreciated. He vaunteth himself, and is puffed up, because his neighbor, who once stood high in public estimation, is put down by his sagacity in detecting his unworthiness. Such a mind seizes with avidity upon the slightest appearance of error in opinion, temper or conduct, which he may perceive, or hear imputed to another; and upon this narrow ground rests the conclusion, that the man is a heretic, a pestilent fellow, a foe to truth, order or religion. A person of such a spirit will find enough to feed his prejudices, in the very best of our imperfect race. If there be in us a *disposition* to think evil of others, whatever be their characters, we shall at once espy some defect, on which we may fasten a censure. Malevolence has a keen and piercing eye. She allows no error to escape. She even penetrates to the very sources of action, and discovers bad motives where the conduct itself is irreproachable. But I trust that this worst sort of uncharitable temper is not very common.

If, however, either of the abovenamed feelings be

dominant, the temper will, in effect, be uncharitable, and continually give rise to prejudice. The resentful and irritable man probably no sooner takes offence, than he conceives an ill opinion of him who gave it, however unintentionally. The envious man too readily believes whatever may be derogatory to the character of another, who enjoys a reputation he himself cannot attain. Nor can the proud, the emulous or anywise selfish, regard without prejudice his successful competitor for wealth, for office or any worldly good.

Another source of prejudice, and the most prolific, is ignorance, or a partial education. We often think ill of the opinions, because we do not understand them; and of the conduct of others because we know nothing of their motives, or of the object proposed to be attained, or of the circumstances of difficulty, under which they have been compelled to act. For example, we may have been educated in the doctrines of a particular sect, and have grown up thinking that they are essentials of the true system; or we have from our youth heard certain political principles inculcated, until we have come to suppose them to be the basis of good government, and all social order. So soon therefore as we hear any different opinions expressed on either subject, we at once conclude that they are false, if not dangerous, and forthwith go about to oppose them with our might. Whereas if we would take pains to examine, and consider well the reasons on which those opinions rest, and the relations in which they stand to other opinions, held by the same persons, we might discover that the whole constituted a system of religion, or politics, comprising more truth than that in which we were

educated. In the same way, as it respects the actions and general manners of some, we are too apt to decide hastily and positively, referring them to our own notions of propriety as an unerring standard, though we accepted these notions from other persons without examination. We, who have been taught to esteem one day above another, do not look complacently upon those, whom we see acting as if they regarded every day alike. And persons, who believe they may eat all things, do regard with something like contempt others who will eat only herbs, (the injunction of the apostle notwithstanding,) although they may never have heard one of the reasons why animal food should be rejected, or why some kinds of meat have been preferred to others. Many instances might be mentioned of this sort of prejudice; but almost every one at the present day is well enough acquainted with it, not to need any further illustrations. It is hazardous to conclude that the principles of men are thoroughly bad, and their feelings devoid of delicacy or kindness, excepting where the grossness of the one, and the wickedness of the other, are too obvious to be explained in consistency with right intentions. There are few persons so totally destitute of goodness as to justify, from their fellow sinners, a general, unreserved, unequivocal censure. And as there may be something valuable to be learned from almost every individual, however humble may be his occupation and confined his understanding, so there probably is in most persons some estimable quality, which, if we were not blinded by prejudice, might be discerned; and which, if we would take the trouble to transplant it into our own hearts, would mend our feelings and im-

prove our conduct. So long as education shall be conducted as it has been, the candid mind will not give implicit confidence to its early impressions. So long as the process of instruction shall be an authoritative dictation of supposed truth, rather than the guidance of the young intellect in judging of its own perceptions, so long will it behoove those who would know whereof they affirm, and be able to give a reason for the faith that is in them, to reconsider carefully the principles which were instilled, and the notions which they imbibed during the years of confiding infancy and early youth.

Another very common source of prejudice is caprice. We not unfrequently take up unfavorable opinions without knowing why, without being able to justify them by even a show of reason; perhaps without being able to account for them at all; or if we can trace them to their origin, it proves to be so unworthy, or so frivolous, that we are ashamed to acknowledge it either to others or ourselves. Sometimes a violent antipathy is excited against particular bodies of men, towns and even nations, because some individuals belonging to them are known to be vicious; or because some of their customs seem to us absurd or pernicious. Oftentimes a whole sect is denounced, merely because we dislike their dress or some of their trifling peculiarities; or because we may have reason to doubt the sincerity of some of their adherents. And, not unfrequently, we decide, that in this or that person there can be no goodness, because the expression of his face is bad.

Thus susceptible of prejudice is the human mind. Great, therefore, is the need, that we be continually on our guard against it. To incite us to weigh carefully

our own opinions, before we venture to act confidently upon them, let us consider a few more of the effects of prejudice when indulged.

When the object of indulged prejudice is a particular set of *opinions*, a theory, or a science, the effect of it necessarily must be to throw a veil over truth. We may be strongly prepossessed in favor of a system, or bitterly opposed to it, and in either case shall be incapable of judging correctly, or of taking that calm view of the subject, without which our perceptions cannot be distinct, nor the results of our examination worthy of our confidence. If we have become bigoted to sentiments, which we adopted without due consideration — if we have received them from those, for whom we justly entertain a high respect — if they are confirmed by habit and endeared associations, we press them closely to our hearts. Whether true or false, we hold them sacred. If attacked, we defend them with our might. The same associations and feelings prompt us to reject instantly all other sentiments, which are opposed to our own, although they may rest on the firmest ground, or be defended by unanswerable reasoning. Thus are we in danger of becoming the zealous champions of error, while we suppose ourselves to be engaged only for the truth. Thus may we be made the veriest tools of a sect or party, while we thank God that he has given us the liberty to reason, judge and act, independently of all but himself; and may be led to boast even that we are doing him service, while we are 'killing the prophets, and stoning them that are sent unto us.' To the malign influence of prejudice, we must ascribe the crucifixion of Jesus Christ by the Jewish nation, and

the persecution and cruelties, which raged for centuries against his followers. To the same source must be referred a great part of the ignorance, superstition and crimes of the dark ages; and many of those absurd claims, decrees and opinions, which disgrace the history of those times. From this source also proceeded that violent opposition, which was made to the revival and growth of learning and of true religion. And from this source do still proceed most of those animosities, that contempt, that bitterness and hatred, which make the path of life, in some of its passes, so wearisome and desolate.

When the objects of prejudice are *persons*, the effect is to deprive us of much of our social happiness. We may, under its influence, be led to call in question the uprightness or the sincerity of the best of men, and thus lose our confidence in all appearance of virtue. We cut ourselves off from the good offices, the kind intercourse and friendship of those, who may have the disposition and the power to contribute much to our enjoyment. There may indeed be some, who cherish the proud hope of being the sole artificers of their own felicity, who disdain to be indebted to others for any of their comforts, and who make no scruple of throwing off even long tried friends from their affection, if some fault or indiscretion, or opposing sentiment should excite their prejudices and inflame their resentment. But this sort of independence never has been, nor ever can be the condition of man. We are all of us members of one family. We are all mutually dependent; and our happiness in this world is so much the result of mutual good will, of mutual forbearance and mutual con-

descension, that he who would stand alone, because he believes his fellow men unworthy of his kind regards, must necessarily become discontented, suspicious and wretched. He sees nothing around him that can give pleasure. Under every flower he suspects a serpent, in every walk a snare, in every face an enemy. What can be the value of life to such a person? What can be the happiness of that man, who has suffered himself to be estranged by his prejudices from those around him — willing at once to think wholly ill of them, because he has discovered in their opinions or their conduct, something which he imagines to be wrong?

Lastly, the tendency of indulged prejudice upon our own characters is to make them unfit for heaven. Those persons, who readily give way to their prejudices, and cherish them, cannot have attended duly to the spirit or precepts of the gospel — to the influence, which it is intended our religion should have upon our temper, no less than our conduct. The ultimate object of all, which Christianity teaches and enjoins, is to make us truly benevolent, to make us love and exercise charity, according to the extended and beautiful description of that surpassing grace, given by St Paul. Hence, we are commanded to regard the character of our heavenly Father himself as the subject for our imitation—'to be followers of him as dear children'—'to be merciful even as he is merciful.' Now we are assured, no less by our own observation and experience, than by the sacred writers, that God is merciful even to the evil and unthankful. Consider, therefore, I pray you, if God, who must know certainly that the opinions of men are erroneous, and their principles corrupt, (when such is the case,) if he still is kind to them, how much more

ought we to be unwilling to condemn and exclude them from our kind regard, seeing that we cannot be certain in any case, that they are wholly wrong, but may find on examination, that the error is, in part at least, on our side. What terms, then, are strong enough to express our arrogance, if, upon mere suspicion of their heresy or misconduct, we expel any of our brethren from our charity and good offices! A spirit which will lead us to do this, is a spirit against which the gates of heaven will be forever closed. If we take time to consider fairly the opinions and the actions of men, we shall probably discover something to qualify the censure, we may feel at first disposed to pronounce. It is the hasty, unadvised decision, which is most likely to become relentless, and to urge men on to all the violence of persecuting bigotry. Happy would it be for the world, thrice happy for the kingdom of Christ, if all, who are eager for the correction of error, or the extirpation of vice, would remember that, though they may 'understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though they may have all faith, so that they can remove mountains, if they have not charity, they are nothing,' and are doing nothing aright in the cause of God, or of human good; and that though they may work miracles, and do many wonderful works in the name of Christ, if they have not his spirit, a spirit of meekness, of forbearance, of gracious consideration of human imperfection, they are none of his, and will be denied before his Father in the kingdom of heaven.

Oh! that the spirit which shall actuate all of us, be the unfeigned, fervent love of truth and virtue, and not the hatred of those whom we believe to be in error or in sin. A readiness to descry the faults of others, to

point them out and denounce them, harmonizes far less with the christian temper, than a solicitude concerning our own errors. Severity of censure or of punishment, if in any measure undeserved, must fail, and always has failed of the intended effect. When the erring and the guilty are persuaded that those, who oppose them, are actuated by benevolence, they may listen, be convinced, be reformed. But if prejudice, pride of opinion, thirst for power be the spring of their actions, no one can tell how much men will endure, rather than submit. It were incredible, if the history of religion and politics did not show us by unnumbered instances, how much men will suffer — loss of property, of liberty, of everything dear in life, and life itself, — rather than yield to the overbearing, even in a matter of trifling moment.

In a country like ours, where there is so much liberty of speaking, thinking and acting, it is manifestly necessary, that error of opinion of any kind should be freely pointed out, and vicious conduct of all sorts should be fearlessly exposed. But this should be done in careful accordance with truth, and under the guidance of a charitable spirit, that greater evils may not spring up to trouble us.

Let inquiry be unfettered. Let its results be plainly and candidly declared. Let popular opinion be controlled by knowledge. Never let your prejudices guide you, in reference to any subject or person ; and never attempt to accomplish a purpose, however desirable, by enlisting the prejudices of others. They are reckless and often erring guides. They can do little good to any cause — they may ruin the best.

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THE

PROSPECTS AND CLAIMS

OF

PURE CHRISTIANITY.

BY JOHN G. PALFREY.

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THIS tract contains the greater part of a sermon delivered at the dedication of the Twelfth Congregational Church in Boston, Oct. 13, 1824. The Exec. Comm. of the AMER. UNIT. ASSOC., in incorporating it with their series, regret only that some of the remarks under the fourth head of the first part may seem less appropriate now than when they were written; they have not however thought it proper to alter them.

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PROSPECTS AND CLAIMS

OF

PURE CHRISTIANITY.

CAN YE NOT DISCERN THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES?

I AM to ask attention to some particulars, in which I conceive that encouraging anticipations concerning what we account uncorrupt Christianity are authorized by the 'signs of the times.'

I. We perceive favorable indications in the CIRCUMSTANCES OF OUR SOCIAL CONDITION. When the inquiry is presented to us, why just views of our religion have as yet made such partial progress, we find ourselves compelled to answer, that it has been in no small part owing to the *legal persecutions* against which they have had to struggle. In that long disastrous period, which preceded the great religious revolution in the sixteenth century, it is well known how dissent in the most minute particulars was punished. In the very dawn of the reformation, views of our religion to a greater extent just, than one would suppose could possibly have been reached so soon and under circumstances so unpropitious, revealed themselves in various and disconnected quarters. But it was before long ascertained by bitter experience, that the right of private judgment, in the

proper extent of that principle, was by no means established, when the rulers of Protestant communities had vindicated it in arms for themselves. *Toleration*, or indulgence, appeared to be the most that the age was ripe for allowing to heretics, that is, to the weaker party in a state; and even the limits of its toleration were extremely narrow. At the height of the contest, which Calvin was professedly carrying on for liberty of conscience, a brother reformer, for exercising his own, suffered martyrdom at his instance, under the most melancholy aggravations. When, warned by this event and others of a like character, the more consistent Protestants from the various states of Europe had fled to Poland, — then the freest country of that continent, — the flourishing community, which they established there, was assailed and at length subverted by a series of the most cruel oppressions. In Holland, severities of a similar kind arrested the reformation at its incipient stage. In our own parent country, within fifteen years after the first translation of the Bible, an ecclesiastic records, that "Arianism now showed itself so openly, and was in such danger of spreading farther, that it was thought necessary to suppress it by more rugged methods than seemed agreeable to the merciful principles of the gospel."* From that period to the period of the revolution, capital executions for this offence were not few; and, when it ceased to be a felony in that kingdom, it was made punishable with incapacities amounting to outlawry, by a statute which was only repealed within the last eighteen years. No one, I trust, will suppose

* Strype, in his life of Archbishop Cranmer.

that these statements are made on account of the sentiment of strong disapprobation, which they excite; but, with the facts before us, that views of Christianity, like those which we maintain, have shown a strong tendency to reveal and diffuse themselves, and that the opposition which has arrested their progress has been, not that of argument, but of violence, we cannot but hope for them a better fate in an age of greatly improved legislation, and especially in a country, whose free institutions place them, as far as institutions of government can do it, on the ground of an equal competition.

But penal laws are by no means the only political provisions for dooming religious knowledge to a perpetual infancy. No contemptible influence is exerted by a *religious establishment*, with its civil prerogatives, its magnificent endowments, and ample patronage. Nor may it be said that these can only operate on vain and mercenary minds. It is hard to determine how effectual may be a bias, which imperceptibly inclines an honest mind to prefer the worse to the better reason. An establishment invests itself with associations of permanence, respectability, and national honor, which have a peculiar attraction for men of character. Nay, a religious faith which has been long professed, even without any secular advantages, must needs be tainted with some extreme infirmity, if it have not wrought itself deep into the texture of society, and the retirements of just and generous feeling. Literature and manners must unavoidably have taken a tone from it. Opinions of every sort have become formed to it, so as to make it appear that a degree of incongruity would be produced by its abandonment. All the kindling associations of

antiquity, which thoughtful men cherish, range themselves by its side to forbid a rude inquisition into its character. By it their fathers lived and died. The institutions, under which they have prospered, remind them, that it was in the stimulus furnished by this faith that they were established and have been maintained; and every monument of ancient worth, every scene of former heroic action or endurance, pleads for it with no feeble urgency. It is not to be doubted that minds, independent and inquisitive on other subjects, have been betrayed into acquiescence and inactivity concerning this, by influences of the kind of which we speak; and therefore we conceive our social institutions to be propitious to the cause of impartial inquiry and Christian truth, not only in their free character, but in their recent date. With us, everything is too new for error to have had time thus to intrench itself; besides that the sentiment, which we associate the most strongly with all that we can call antiquity among us, is an independence and dread of human assumptions over the conscience.

II. We place no small reliance on the improved HABITS OF THINKING which prevail. We observe that opinions, which we reject, have been recommended by a weight of authority, which has heretofore been able to afford them very efficient support. A subjection of its judgments to authority indicates a sensitive debility of the mind; a condition of it, in which it has been either enervated and deprived of self reliance by fear, or has surrendered itself to the power of imagination and sentiment. The natural consummation of implicit self surrender to a traditional belief is witnessed in the mental dwarfishness of those Eastern nations, whose intellect

has been cramped by it for ages. Under a similar tyranny the scarcely more improved portion of mankind, called civilized, long languished in a truly wretched condition of abjectness and impotence; and crude and hasty opinions, started in a dark period of Christian history, were meanwhile maintained and transmitted in the character of venerable truths. But the influence of authority has sensibly declined. It has come to be understood, that, for the world to refuse to reform its opinions, as it grows older and more discerning, is no more to be justified, than for an individual to reject the judgments of his maturer years because they contradict his childish conceptions. We now take very little upon trust. It is the growing habit of the times for every man to have his own opinions; and it is almost indispensable to our self respect and our claim of respect from others, that we should be able to maintain them by reasons of our own. Thus a main support of erroneous theories has been withdrawn; and an upright, unbiassed, investigation of Christian truth is no longer so severe an effort for the mind.

Compared with others, this is not only an age of *independent judgment*, but of energetic and excursive *inquiry*. It not only refuses to have error imposed upon it, but it goes out adventurously in pursuit of truth. The reverence, which had been felt for forms of human device, has not, long and generally enough, been transferred to the scriptures, (the true source of knowledge and umpire in controversy,) to bear freely, as yet, its proper fruits; and there are moral causes, which have hitherto prevented the same general interest from being felt in religion as in other practical sciences. But we

look forward with happy anticipations to a time, approaching in the probable course of events, when the intrepidity and earnestness, which have characterized researches into other departments of knowledge, will be carried more extensively than now into the investigations of the sublimest of them all; — when a due portion of the awakened intellect of men will be given to a curious inquisition into the sense of the 'lively oracles,' a keen attention to learn that 'mind of the Lord', which they disclose.

The present may perhaps be safely described as comparatively an age of *exact* thinking. A severer, if a less pretending, logic has taken the place of that magnificent apparatus of self deception, which disputants of other times were used to wield. Men are not so apt as they have been to misapprehend the bearing of a known truth on a truth under discussion, or to permit the strength of their confidence to be widely out of proportion to the strength of their reasons. At any rate, whatever they may think of this, all will agree, that the age is of such a practical character as to be comparatively little prone to deviate from exactness on the side of mysticism; and herein we discern an omen of no small encouragement. There has been no enemy to the power of Christianity greater than the imputation, under which it has labored, of being a faith of mysteries. Nothing could more completely confuse, nothing could more effectually discourage the study of it, than to represent it as to such a degree intricate, and so essentially different from other subjects of human knowledge, as to unsettle by its adoption the radical principles of belief. Nothing could be more sure to prejudice thinking men against it, than the

idea of its attempting a violent divorce of that eternal union, which God has instituted between the understanding and truth. Nothing could more directly tend to deaden that interest of the mind in it, without which the interest of the heart has only a most feeble and precarious life. No other source of error could be so endlessly prolific. If we can assent to one proposition, that seems self contradictory, we may assent on the same terms to another; and there is nothing to prevent us from believing, against all evidence, that Christianity is a fable, and the being of God a dream. In this age of wary thought, the truth is less obscured than it has been, that the doctrines of revealed religion differ from other parts of our knowledge in the method of their communication and the importance of their uses, and not in the strange peculiarity of bearing a strong likeness to falsehood in its most distinguishing feature. In truths relating to religion, as well as others, we have begun to look for the appropriate signatures of truth. And there has appeared such a settled and growing dissatisfaction with arguments, which assume that religion is a peculiarly unintelligible subject, that a corresponding change may already be observed in the conduct of controversies. We much less commonly than heretofore find doctrines, charged with involving contradiction, sheltered under the name of mysteries. They are now more frequently defended by attempts to show, that the alleged repugnancy to reason does not exist.

Besides these general principles of a reformation of religious opinion, there are particulars, in which a fatal inconsistency might be pointed out between single errors that have prevailed and the habits of thinking that

are gaining ground, such as in its natural consequence must needs operate to the subversion of the former. But it would lead us too far, to attempt thus to particularize. If the almost obsolete doctrine of the saving power of ordinances is not the only popular tenet marked with the impress of an age that believed in charms and magic, rather than of an age, accustomed to attend to a connexion between causes and effects, we may be sure that it is not to go alone into the tomb of once powerful delusions. If our belief is just, that the system improperly called orthodox, has throughout a close congeniality with the infancy of the mind, — the immature, unformed, dependent stage of its progress, — our inference is safe that, as the latter is left behind, the former too will disappear. False doctrines in religion were scarcely more securely established, three centuries ago, than false doctrines in politics. If they rested equally on that basis of implicit, incurious, bewildered faith, which has since been effectually shaken, it was to be expected that the religious errors would be the last to be thoroughly exposed, because, among other reasons, the investigation of these is approached with a greater awe. The best, as yet, among the triumphs of the reanimated mind of man has been achieved among ourselves. May we not hope that a far better still awaits it here? Our native country has led the way in the rejection of political errors. Is it forbidden by the 'signs of the times' to hope, that it is to be also the pioneer of a wide religious reformation? The oversight of such solemn interests as the interests of this people, at stake upon their own exercise of independent and cautious thought, may safely be assumed to be so far a salutary discipline

of the mind to prepare it for all grave investigations; and in the next generation will be comprehended many, who, in receiving the truths of uncorrupt Christianity, will not have those prejudices of education to correct, which have been obstacles, hard and grievous to surmount, in the way of most of their predecessors of this age.

III. We draw a favorable augury from the improved and improving STATE OF INFORMATION. The system of orthodoxy had its birth in a very ignorant period of the world. Such a period is its proper element; and, tenacious as it is of life, it does not seem to be properly constituted to thrive in any other. The doctrine of the Trinity, in the complete form in which it has been transmitted to us, dates from the latter part of the fourth century. It is traced to that system of philosophy, — unjustly called the Platonic, for few of its vagaries are chargeable on the philosopher from whom it borrowed its name, — which, in that age of visionary speculation, abused the minds of studious men. The introduction into the church of total depravity and predestination, with their kindred errors, is referred to a period somewhat later; but these doctrines never obtained a paramount authority in the church of Rome, nor appeared till the era of the reformation in the prominence, into which they have since been forced. Of that period in the history of the religious world, to which the name *reformation* is commonly limited, no more can be justly said, than that an almost total eclipse began then to pass away from the mind. It was by no means to be expected, that a complete revision and expurgation of religious doctrine should be made in the course of a few

years; in the hurry and tumult of civil wars; while so many practical abuses were first to be redressed; while ancient prejudices were as yet only unsettled; while not only the opposition of the bigoted was to be encountered, but also the scruples of the timid; and while the art of thinking was yet to be learned.

But what I am here particularly concerned to notice is, that the *learning* requisite for a successful criticism of the scriptures was very partially possessed by the leading reformers. They were but moderately acquainted with the original languages, and very imperfectly with those kindred dialects, which have since thrown so much light upon scriptural phraseology. Their investigations into the composition and history of the Bible had not been sufficiently extensive to correct essentially those false rules of interpretation, which had prevailed; and their comparisons of 'spiritual things with spiritual' had been greatly incomplete. And let it be always remembered, that there was then no genuine good sense, as now, of a well informed common people, to correct the extravagances of reasoning pride; but men, whose minds were prepossessed with idle systems, — scholars, such as they were in those days, studying and reasoning in the trammels of a vicious scholarship, — were the instructers of Christians in Christian doctrine. It was not till a later period that the scriptures, (to say nothing of adequate means of understanding them,) could be said to be in the possession of the people at large. Translations, it is true, were soon made; but, in the existing state of unacquaintance with the elements of knowledge, their circulation was of course extremely confined, and the per-

ception of their meaning still more so; and the few, who could read and gather any opinions from them, were no match for the already organized ascendency of those, who were theorists by profession, and, as such, incompetent interpreters, as theories then were, of a book like the Bible. I repeat it, the Bible cannot be said to have been to any considerable extent subjected to the investigation of unprejudiced men till within a recent period; and I would particularly ask attention to this fact from those, who are fond of founding an argument on the opinions of the first settlers of this part of our country; — men, worthy of all reverence for their virtues, but whose judgments on a question of scriptural research we can by no means prefer to our own. King James' version, — the first which came into very extensive use, — had scarcely been published when they landed in this country. How many copies is it probable they brought with them? Of those whose opinions are now quoted as authority to us, how many is it reasonable to assume that there were, who had read the Bible with a patient scrutiny? How many may be supposed to have had any definite information concerning its sense, distinct from what they had gathered from the expositions of systematic theologians? Even the more judicious Christian expositors of that time, and long afterwards, labored under an inconvenience arising from their being but partially possessed of the requisite learning; as, I suppose, any one familiar with the early Arminian writers must have noticed.

This is a deficiency, which has long been in a course of adequate supply. If the doctrines of the Bible have

not yet been extensively enough investigated with the lively interest which they deserve, few branches of knowledge, since the reformation, have received equally laborious attention from able men with those which elucidate its meaning. A pure text has been obtained by the collection of numerous authorities; the original languages of scripture, and others which explain their words and forms of speech, have come to be vastly better understood than they were at the time when Protestant creeds were framed; the opinions, the manners, and events of the period, to which the books of the New Testament refer, — all subsidiary branches of knowledge, in short, — have been curiously investigated; and that argument on such questions is not doomed to be wholly unavailing, a satisfactory practical proof has been given in the almost unanimous dismission from the controversy, by learned Christians of all opinions, of three texts,* always reckoned among the most plausible in defence of the triple distinction in the Godhead. Scriptural knowledge has not only become far more comprehensive, profound and exact, but it has begun to assume a popular form, and has been brought sufficiently within the reach of common readers, to give them some preparation for estimating the weight of statements and arguments proposed in expositions and controversy. It is as true as it is melancholy, that attempts to put the public at large in possession of the needful information for a better understanding of the word of life, still meet with strong opposition. But that knowledge has been acquired; it is secure; and it will diffuse itself. Thanks to the kind providence, which preceded

* Acts, xx. 28. 1 Tim. iii. 16. 1 John v. 7.

the reformation of the Christian faith by an art for communicating and perpetuating truth, there is no suppressing it. It is the permanent, inalienable property of man. It will be time to fear that it will be lost, when we see the intellectual world stop short in its swift progress, and roll back towards the thick darkness from which the fifteenth century delivered it. It is a steadily, though it be a silently operating agent of reform, destined to work more and more mightily for the overthrow of the strong holds of error.

It would be here the place to speak of another influence of the existing and improving state of information, in favoring the progress of religious truth; but I have only time for a passing allusion to it. There is a principle of consistency in the human mind, which requires a correspondence between the different subjects of its belief; and whatever opinion is distinctly seen to be adverse to or incongruous with the rest, must, if they are retained, be itself discarded. In this way we conceive that the progress of information of every sort is weeding out false opinions in religion. They are at war with all the rest of our knowledge; and, the more our knowledge on other subjects is enlarged, the more distinctly will their discrepancy with it appear. Every new truth we discover, of any sort, is a new foe to them, and, as fast as its relations and consequences are observed, exerts an augmented power to expose and dispossess them. The stronger lights, which will thus be thrown upon them, will help to remove that indefiniteness to which they have so long resorted for shelter, and their real repulsive shape will be more and more palpably revealed.

IV. We discern an encouraging 'sign of the times' in the STATE OF FEELING which exists, and is gaining ground. — Rational views of Christianity have been always pleading for a candid examination. They have been always urging, that they were ready to abide by the result of the most severe impartial scrutiny. But this privilege has been denied them. They have been regarded with jealous and stubborn prejudice; and whatever converts they have made, they have violently drawn to themselves by force of the strong reasons they were able to produce. It would be disingenuous to say, that this state of things has entirely ceased; but we feel authorised to represent the temper of the times as comparatively a spirit of *candor*. The habit of liberal inquiry on all subjects favors such a spirit; the universal discipline of the mind, at the present day, is in no small degree congenial with its enlargement and elevation; the eminent virtues of many persons, professing rational views of our religion, have done not a little to lighten the odium, under which these have labored; the weighty obligations, under which the world has come to distinguished individuals among them, has not been wholly without effect to conciliate it; and the controversies, in which they have taken part, have caused their opinions and characters to be more justly estimated. Controversy, with all its temptations, is by no means to be indiscriminately charged with cherishing an unkind spirit. Nothing softens men so much as to see reasons for entertaining a mutual respect; to be shown that they, who differ from them, differ deliberately and conscientiously; and never, at any period in Christendom of the most profound religious ignorance and apathy, were there so

many, who could bear a contradiction, and consider an adverse argument with good temper, as at this busy period of religious discussion.

Again; there are indications which seem to justify the remark, that the state of feeling, in respect to religion, is characterised by *engagedness*. There was perhaps never a time, when its doctrines were discussed in the Protestant world with more appearance of genuine interest; when it made a more frequent subject of conversation; when it could more readily command exertions and sacrifices; or when its appropriate spirit had a greater control over the motions of society. Now in proportion as religion is felt to be a momentous reality, it is reasonable to expect that religious inquiries will be pursued with an intense desire to know the truth. That state of feeling, which has hitherto exposed the exercise of candor to the reproach of indifference, will disappear. That argument, which men never use with respect to trade, or politics, or anything else in which their minds are really engaged, — that it s of little consequence what a man believes, — will no longer be used in respect to religion. It will be perceived that, of all kinds of truth, that is infinitely the most valuable, which relates to men's infinitely most important interests; and the energies of the mind will be bent to its acquisition in some better proportion to its worth.

Nor are those, who have habitually avoided the discussion of religious doctrines, the only persons, whose religious knowledge must needs be increased by a deeper conviction of its value. It is perfectly obvious, that many persons are animated by far more zeal in defend-

ing their opinions, than in ascertaining them. They are earnest in 'holding fast,' but not in 'proving all things,' to see that what they hold fast 'is good;'—which would not be, if they had a deep practical interest in the subject. Indeed, so great have become the advantages for investigating Christian truth, that I am impressed with the belief, that nothing is so much wanting henceforward as 'simplicity and godly sincerity,' in the use of them. The thing mainly needful is, to begin and conduct our researches under a strong impression of the importance of arriving at the truth, such as shall raise us above every meaner motive; such as shall make us deaf to the solicitations of partiality and prejudice, inflexible by the favor or the fear of man. Men reason very carelessly on the subject of Christianity. They seem to think that they can be justified in starting with some general prepossession concerning it, which has a plausible appearance, and interpreting the whole system by that key. Thus one takes, for the basis of his reasoning, some loose views of the divine sovereignty, and another arrives at opposite conclusions from views equally loose of the divine mercy. One, acknowledging the worth of an humble spirit, seeks to debase man from his station of a responsible agent, because he conceives that this would favor humility; while another perceives that Christianity must be a serious or a fervent religion, and accordingly, whatever doctrine his judgment or his imagination connects with seriousness and fervor, he hastily embraces without the due attention to its evidence. Men's consciences are hard upon this point, or they would not do an injustice to religion, which they do to no other important subject, by theo-

rising so confidently upon it. When a scrutiny like that exercised on questions of *law*, for example, shall have been generally bestowed on the sacred records, — when the rules of evidence shall have been as honestly applied to them, and their decisions been sought out with an equal acuteness and vigor, — I see no cause to doubt, that the genuine doctrines of religion will be as unanimously acknowledged as the doctrines of law; and for such a consummation we are encouraged to hope by every appearance of increasing interest in religion.

One more remark respecting the habits of feeling which prevail. The *moral sentiment* of the times is in advance of that of earlier periods, and is still in a progress of elevation and refinement. The value of moral excellence is more acknowledged. Religion and goodness are not set in opposition, as in other times they have been. The treacherous and sanguinary men, whom the gross devotion of other times has canonized, would attract no reverence in this period of the world; and, tenaciously as the argument is still maintained, that moral worth, — the true perfection of man, — is of no account in the sight of God, there is still no theory which does not provide some method, however circuitous, to enforce its obligation. The omen is a good one. In proportion as the worth of moral excellence is perceived, the nature of Christianity, as an instrument for forming that excellence, will reveal itself also; and there is no principle, more essential than this of its practical character, its moral design, to a consistent and comprehensive view of its truths.

There is another way, in which an improved moral sentiment favors a right understanding of our religion.

It tends to correct very erroneous conceptions of the divine character, which, taking their rise from a rude state of moral feeling, have done in past times deep discredit to our holy faith. It is within a recent period, that the doctrine of the damnation of infants was commonly maintained. The better moral sentiment of these times so revolts from it, that it is now very rarely, at least, avowed. — There is reason to hope, that a still greater sensibility to reproaches on the character of God will before long silence that heart-withering charge against it, which is conveyed in the doctrine of election and reprobation. Already it is perceived to be critical ground, and that doctrine is set forth, not in its horrible nakedness, but in phraseology, which, by perplexing the subject, evades or qualifies the strong disgust, with which it would otherwise be generally met. This alone is a great gain. The public mind, no longer plied with arguments for believing things of God, which it would abhor in man, has not, to the same extent as formerly, its moral judgments confounded, and its devout affections repelled; and, restored to its healthy tone, will soon be incapable of looking on such errors except with shuddering and loathing.

V. We form encouraging anticipations concerning the future, from the EXPERIENCE OF THE PAST, limited though it be. The principles of improved religious knowledge, to which we have referred, though as yet only tending towards their mature strength, have already borne excellent fruit; and it is to be observed, that the parts of Christendom, in which rational views of religion have made the greatest progress, have been those, in which the scriptures have been studied with

the liveliest interest, and under the best advantages. In Geneva, the spontaneous soil, the central point and strong hold of Orthodoxy, where, from the first establishment of Protestantism, religious studies have been industriously pursued by a select, accomplished, and, for a long time, bigoted clergy, they have already triumphed over the creeds of Calvin, and superseded his doctrine in the churches. In England, the secure establishment of the national church against the attempts of Popery on the one hand, and nonconformity on the other, had afforded no long time for calm investigation, before we find a large and most respectable portion of its clergy petitioning for relief from the obligation of subscription to articles, which they perceived to contain essential errors. In Holland, though it is but lately that a rigid censorship over the press has ceased, rational opinions in religion are understood already to prevail to no inconsiderable extent; and in America they have diffused and are diffusing themselves with a rapidity, which has surprised even their advocates. —Nor are we to estimate their progress merely by the numbers of those, who have adopted them. They are justly considered to have gained ground, in proportion as the tone of the opposite errors is lowered; and the controversies, by which they have been maintained, have undeniably had the effect, not only of making converts to them, but of bringing the views of their opponents much nearer to scripture and reason than they had been. With the same causes in continually stronger operation, which have actually reformed the views of so many of this generation, may not a great progress of religious opinion be reasonably looked for in the next?

Such are some of the 'signs of the times,' which we interpret to mean that a better day for Christianity is approaching. Can any prospect be more delightful to the eye of philanthropy or devotion? The reformers, as we style them, entered upon their work with very inadequate conceptions of its extent; they prosecuted it, under such a disadvantage, against an almost overpowering opposition; and it is no wonder that they died and left it greatly incomplete. Meanwhile, the errors, which had escaped their animadversion or won their favor, had become in their turn established errors, and governments were pledged and prejudices enlisted in their behalf. There was no short period in Protestant history, when the reformation seemed to be at a stand; when the mind appeared to have been struggling under a load too heavy for it; when there was cause to fear that religious liberty had only been wrested from its oppressors to be laid by in neglect. But it was an unjust fear. The mighty agent of intellectual and moral power, when it had burst its prison-house, only stood for a time to survey the field of its labors, and collect its strength. It is no inactive principle. It is either weighed down by fetters stronger than can now be forged, or it is working with all but omnipotent energy at all the springs of society and thought. Already some of the most grievous abuses have fallen in the dust before it; and already errors, which have not yet ceased to maintain a confident bearing, are quaking at the speed of its noiseless march. We live at the happy age to witness its triumphs. Our eyes are privileged to see the progress of this great 'salvation of the Lord.'

I am far from maintaining, that the work of religious reform is mainly effected. There are mighty instru-

ments in operation to forward it; but it is a great and difficult work, and will find occasion for all the force they can exert.—There is much indifference on the subject, which is only to be aroused by vivid, and various, and seasonable exhibitions of its importance. There remains a lamentable degree of ignorance concerning it, which is only to be informed by much time and patient industry. There are still many deeply seated prejudices, which it is a delicate and a slow task to root out. The chain, with which errors in religion have bound themselves to men's interests and passions, needs to be broken link by link. To expose them, is often to encounter displeasure and distrust, and here is a discouragement and a disadvantage. But the situation of him who, in this period of the world, 'contends for the' pure 'faith once delivered to the saints,' is still far different from theirs, who have assumed the same office in other times. The day, so anxiously looked for, of a thorough religious reformation, has dawned upon us. The mists of the morning still obscure its rising sun; but it is melting them fast, as it climbs to its meridian, and scatters 'healing from its wings.' We rejoice in its light. We bless the kind providence that sends its animating influences, and welcome to their happy destiny them who shall watch it, as it sheds the 'perfect day.'

Meanwhile, to what purpose is it to 'discern' these favorable 'signs of the times,' unless it be to encourage us to follow the leadings of providence, and do our endeavor that the signs we rejoice in may be fulfilled? While we profess so much satisfaction that we have been led to adopt the faith of Christ in its primitive simplicity,

let me ask the question, whether we are sufficiently in the habit of regarding it as a *trust;* whether we perceive distinctly enough that an obligation lies upon us to pray, give, and labor for its diffusion? I am confident in affirming, that no man, who has received it, can consistently observe its progress with unconcern; that on no ground, except that of natural incapacity, can any man dispense himself from the duty, 'even as he hath received the gift, of ministering the same as a good steward of the manifold grace of God.' No; he who, in this age of limited religious knowledge, has been brought to the reception of 'the truth as it is in Jesus,' has received a broad commission for the service of mankind; he has been appointed to a weighty charge; he is aided by great advantages; and he will be called to a strict reckoning. The Protestant reformers,—when the work was to be begun, and a voice or a hand was lifted for its aid at the risk of all that feeble nature shrinks from,—might better have been pardoned, if they had all 'begun with one consent to make excuse;' but if we, when the work is to be carried on at the hazard of only a little inconvenience or obloquy; if we, taking it up at that advanced point, that three centuries more of equal progress with the last three would place it beyond the power of opposition; if we should suffer it to be overborne, what name of contempt will a wronged posterity find, expressive enough to immortalize our infamy?

I shall be told, perhaps, that it can scarcely be of great consequence to labor for the reformation of errors in religion, because the Christian character is found exhibited in equal excellence among the professors of different systems of religious doctrine. I would be the

last to call in question the substantial justness of this statement, whatever qualification a close analysis might show it to require. I trust I not only acknowledge, but deeply and humbly feel it to be to a great extent true; and I would be rebuked and excited by the eminent graces of some, whose belief I call in important respects corrupt,—dishonorable to God, opposed to scripture, and adverse to religious progress. So far from their religious character being uncharitably implicated in the judgment which is passed on their opinions, they themselves will be the readiest to allow, that, if they have erred through want of caution, diligence and prayer, they are convicted of an unfaithfulness, for which they have need of pardon; and, on the other hand, the admission will as readily be made, that, if their error has been involuntary and unavoidable, the virtues, which they formed under the disadvantages arising from it, are only more complete evidence of their hearts being 'right with God.' They have become good Christians in despite of their errors, by force of those leading religious truths, which, standing aloof from their false theories, and aided by their good feelings and good sense, alone exerted a really efficient power over their lives. But, while we emulate their attainments, may we not think that a character, whose root was so firm as to withstand such a shock, might have swelled into still nobler dimensions under the culture of a more spiritual and generous faith? Must we not wish that they had been saved from a kind of temptation, of which we have only to say, that they have not been shaken by it as might have been feared? Can we reasonably expect, that error will be always without effect; that it needs

not to be discarded, because it will always be disarmed; that in all other hearts it will be counteracted and inoperative, as it has been in theirs?

Can we justify it to ourselves to have no concern for that large description of men, who, — believing religion from the unjust representations they have heard of it, to be a narrow, inexplicable, repulsive thing, — never acquaint themselves intimately with the spirit of its sanctifying rules, the peace and joy of its elevating consolations, nor know it in any other character than as a punctilious and at the same time obscure law-giver, whose requisitions they flatter themselves must at last be dispensed with, for the very reason that it is so difficult to meet, or even to ascertain them? Is it not worth some pains at our hands, to present religion to such men in her substantial, winning shape, that she may take hold of the hand with which they are groping in darkness, and guide their now undirected steps? Have we no concern for the wasted glory of those finer minds, which, able to put forth the choicest hue and fragrance under the pure glow of heaven, have languished and withered beneath the touch of a blighting scepticism? Have we no compassion for them, because they have been so much in fault? Do we not care to reclaim the infidel, by showing him that the trifling or incredible dogmas, which his hasty reason rejected, do not belong to our religion, and that it is a religion, which he, who prizes his understanding and would give it its most ample culture, cannot reject, and cannot overrate? Have we no pity for the Mahommedan, the heathen, and the Jew; and do we not care to present the saving faith of Jesus to them with her 'beautiful garments' put on, instead of her

motley disguise of Oriental and Gothic metaphysics, that they may no longer turn away with such an unhesitating incredulity?

Let us do no such injustice to the omnipotence of truth, as to think it a sluggish element. It is thoroughly instinct with life. There is no estimating the vigor of its vitality, or the bounty of its fruitfulness. And it is not our business to estimate them. But it is our business to place it where it may spread and fructify. The religious sentiment, which we do not hold for truth, is worthless or mischievous, and we must reject it. That, which we do hold for truth, is inestimable, and we must impart it. If the reformers had reckoned the dissemination of just religious views no worthy object of great zeal, we might now have been buying indulgences, or doing whatever other impious act an infatuated ecclesiastical authority might have imposed; for they too might have argued,— while the church of Rome can form such characters as those of Ximenes and More, why take the risk and trouble of reforming it? If it be not a fit object of human effort, why does the divine providence seem now to be moving it so rapidly onward on the swelling current of human improvement? No; religion was meant to do no less an office than to lay a powerful hand on all the affections and faculties of men. False religion, in its least hurtful form, is that same hand smitten with palsy, which, though it should be as willing, can never be so strong.—Divine wisdom is our pledge, that the unadulterated system of evangelical truth is able to form a christian character of greater grace and elevation, is able to develope and mature a more godlike virtue, than is within the reach of the most re-

spectable among its counterfeits. Acknowledging, as all men do, the imperfection of the Christian character, as it has been hitherto exhibited in the best of Christians, we have a right to assume, that the proper instrument for removing that imperfection is the unobstructed power of pure Christian truth. But, even if it were not so, even if we should allow truth to be no more fit than error 'for the use of edifying' the really religious mind,— we should still have motive enough for striving to diffuse it, in the hope of engaging the indifferent, convincing the sceptic, and evangelizing the heathen. The statement, that sincere men, who believe error, are as advanced Christians as sincere men who believe truth, would be unsatisfactory in this connexion, however just it might be proved to be. The undeniable and the really important consideration is, that, according as religious truth or error prevails in the world, the amount of religious feeling and conduct in the world is greatly augmented or abridged.

Will we justify ourselves then for taking no part in this momentous work by such arguments as, that *the truth is great and will prevail;* — that God knows how to accomplish his own great purposes, and, when the time is come, will bring them to pass without any help of ours? God is able to accomplish his own purposes; but, when they have related to human welfare, it is not often that he has accomplished them except by human agency. Truth is great, and will prevail. But it will prevail because it is great enough to enlist strenuous minds in its cause. It was great in the Apostles' times; but it did not prevail, till, by impressive evidence of the power of its confessors to do and to bear, it had over-

powered the bigoted opposition of an unbelieving world. It was very great at the period of the Protestant reformation, and it prevailed, because it was great enough to nerve its champions to do desperate duty on the fields of Switzerland and Germany, and its martyrs to glut the flames and dungeons of England, Italy, and Spain. We are not to expect miracles to do what God has designated for the appropriate work of well-principled human energy. We are not to discharge ourselves from the duty of promoting a good object, by saying that it cannot but be contemplated in the counsels of God. God designs that his truth shall be diffused; and he designs that men, impressed with its worth, and faithful to its obligations, shall diffuse it. It will at length prevail, because men will not always be content to express a confidence in its power, for the purpose of releasing themselves from its service. We have only to decide whether it shall be advanced by our instrumentality, or left for other hands; and our assumption, true as it may abstractly be, will be false in its application, as long as it is used for our apology. We are self-contradicted, if we argue that truth is great enough to make its way, while our conduct shows that it is not great enough to command from us those services, by means of which it must ultimately triumph.

Do we say, then, that we will not be fellow-workers with providence in this great work of religious reformation, because it will subject us to the imputation of a party spirit? God forbid that such a spirit should ever actuate us! It wages deadly war with that temper—of universal charity—which is the distinguishing temper of the gospel and its author. It gives the mole's eye, and

the adder's ear, and makes the heart like the 'nether mill-stone.' God keep us from bringing scandal on such a holy cause, by enlisting for it such a corrupt auxiliary, and dispose us,— so far from laboring for it with any selfish view,— to wish from our hearts, that, if we have mistaken its character, a signal defeat may follow all our endeavors for its advancement! But, on the other hand, let us remember, that the promoters of the largest designs of the most pure and elevated charity are liable to the stigma of a party zeal; and we are by no means at liberty to abandon a post of duty, because of the danger that a bad name may be applied to the earnestness, with which we labor in it. It would be an easy task, indeed, to frustrate good undertakings, whose accomplishment requires joint effort, if to call their advocates partisans, were sufficient to discourage them; and would it not be a shameful confession, that a good cause suffered for want of our support, because we feared our motive would be mistaken? If we are capable of being moved by such an apprehension, we may be sure that it is not such advocates as we, that any cause asks, or can be advanced by.

But are we anxious lest we should become tinctured, and not lest we should be charged, with a narrow spirit of party? This is a reasonable anxiety, and we ought to cherish it. It is an anxiety, however, which, vigilant as it ought to make us, does not entitle us to find our safety in unprofitableness. We have no right to shrink from entering on a sphere of duty, which God has opened, because he has also placed temptations there. What would the condition of the world be now, if they, who have rendered it important services, had excused them-

selves because of the danger, that, by the fault of others, they might be placed in situations where their dignity might be exposed, or beset with opposition of a nature to ruffle their tempers? If we are truly fit for God's service and the world's, we shall distinctly contemplate these dangers, and cautiously guard against them; but we shall not practise such a self-deception, as to think of evading them by relinquishing our set task. When the best happiness, the most weighty interests of others, are in some sort given us in charge, we have no more a right to abandon them, for fear of being tempted to promote them in a narrow spirit, than we should have a right to say, that we will not give in charity, lest we should contract a habit of profuseness, and that we will not ask in prayer, lest we should be tempted to a negligence of our secular concerns. One way alone is safe for us; to enter boldly on the field of our appointed duty, and trust humbly to our own watchfulness and the grace of God, whom we are serving, to secure us in its attending trials.

This is the spirit, by which we should be actuated; a glowing zeal to promote the influence of our religion, and a jealous self-distrust, lest our ardor should betray us into any deviations from its path. A party spirit never served religion, and it never will. We must give it no aliment; we must allow it no indulgence. If suspected, it discredits our labors; if real, it vitiates and makes them vain. Without a fervent, and, if need be, a self-denying spirit of religious reform, on the other hand, religious truth is not to advance; and, unless we will say, that the cause which God most favors deserves not our concern, we shall not discard the one because

of the odium which justly weighs upon the other. They are so easily distinguished, that it would seem as if only blindness or perversity were in danger of confounding them. When we aim at the defeat of an opponent rather than at his conviction, — to work him shame and not to do him good; when our dissent from his opinions estranges or impairs our good will; above all, should we be tempted to aim at an advantage over him by any artifice; it is no better than an earthborn party spirit, which impels us, though it be presumptuous enough to call itself a zeal for God. But, if we have such a sincere generous love of truth as to labor and rejoice in its dissemination, not for our credit who offer it, but for the sake of its own precious uses; if our benevolence, and not our pride, is wounded by its rejection and gratified by its prevalence, this is an ardor which cannot glow too warmly. It is the appropriate spirit of reformers. It is the spirit of apostles; of the Son of God himself.

When this spirit exists as it ought, the question will not need to be asked, in what way it shall be manifested. It will throw itself into wide and various action, and the world will bear its trophies. Is the inquiry made, however, what we, of this age, may particularly do towards the diffusion of a powerfully enlightening and sanctifying faith? I answer: some of us may carefully expound, and formally maintain it. The least demand it makes of us, is that of a frank avowal of our sense of its reality and importance. It cautions us against representing the distinction between itself and error to be immaterial, as against a habit of evil omen. We are not indeed required to sequester the church

from its proper uses, to make it a theatre of controversy. Far from it. But, in whatever department or connexion we undertake to exhibit truth, we must represent it distinctly, as it has disclosed itself to us, and not in those generalities which make it ambiguous and unaffecting; still less, with an appearance of reserve, of self-diffidence, and cold preference for it, which can have no directer tendency, than to prevent any strong reliance on our more explicit statements.—Ministers and parents have access to the forming minds of those, who are forthwith to speak the public voice, and the fair tablet should be carefully stamped by them with the deep and graceful impress of truth. — Christians should be faithful to it in the walks of their common life, and the sentiments of their familiar conversation. — There is no so worthy object for the devotion of the more efficient class of minds. What is a poem written, to a soul edified; or an office won, to a principle established? — The eminent and popular friends of uncorrupt religion should, in all unostentatious ways, make known their attachment to it, that as far as possible they may transfer to it the respect in which themselves are held; and they, who have been won to it where it is in disrepute, should on their part, —'unshaken, unseduced, unterrified' — show by a manly though a meek profession, that they are 'not ashamed of the gospel of Christ,' as it has manifested itself to them. They should regard themselves as appointed to maintain its honor and assert its claims, each in his separate sphere; and, so far from permitting themselves to be dispirited or overborne, should rejoice in being 'counted worthy,' (if that should be,) 'to suffer shame for such a name.' What have they to fear, be-

lieving, as they must, that the defenders of the declining corruptions, which they assail, are but writing the epitaphs of their own fame? What more would they have to stimulate them, when they consider that the grateful memory, in which the world holds its inventors and discoverers in art and science, is languid, compared with what must be cherished hereafter by saints in earth and heaven for every individual, who has done a worthy service in restoring to the faith of Christ its primitive integrity and power? — Religious truth is to be advanced towards its due ascendency by the labors of a learned and devoted ministry; and our institutions for forming and supporting such a ministry should not be left to languish. — Missionaries should be sent out by a systematic and liberal charity; not into well ordered christian communities, able to provide christian privileges for themselves. A breach of christian charity may not be thus risked for the introduction of a more correct religious theory, and where the 'power of godliness' prevails, the 'doctrine according to godliness' may be safely left to work its own way. But they should be sent into the moral wastes of our own country, to 'make them rejoice and blossom.' They should be sent to those rising but feeble churches, whose corrected views require an enlightened ministry 'to build them up in the most holy faith,' and help them 'grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour.' They should be sent to undeceive those misbelieving nations, who have as yet no worthier idea of our religion than that it is a system which they could not understand or receive, if they were ever so well disposed; and so bring back, if it please God, from

distant continents and islands, a new and brilliant evidence of its power. — This is a reading age, and there is no more direct access of light to men's minds than through 'the spectacles of books.' It becomes us to take care that this avenue be everywhere provided for its entrance. Societies for the gratuitous distribution of the scriptures should be bountifully patronized. They have already been read to vast profit, and they are to be read to greater profit still. Books assisting in the explanation of them, — popular commentaries and treatises, — books of devotion, sermons, religious narratives, and polemical writings from the most elaborate to the most familiar, should be put in liberal circulation by the charitable care of the opulent. There is a great taste and demand for all such works, and cast as they may seem on the untracked waters, there is a rich return from them 'after many days.'

Finally and chiefly, every individual should be perpetually and earnestly intent on recommending what he receives for religious truth by his own bright example of its efficacy. This is an unobtrusive argument, but ultimately it never fails to be to a great extent a triumphant one. Never were contemned heresies more unsparingly vilified than were those of the Methodists and Friends; but they have *lived* their way into public veneration. They have not only overcome prejudice, but have actually gained prejudice over to their side by the humble fervor of their piety, and the splendid labors of their beneficence. The Catholics are in many places regaining their once forfeited standing by a similar honorable course. Here is experimental proof, that we are able, by the persuasive testimony of holy lives, to re-

lieve our views of Christianity from that weight of unreasonable dislike, by which we have lamented to see them oppressed. When we observe the power of exemplary goodness to disarm uncharitableness against what we account error, we must needs allow to it an invincible power to disarm uncharitableness against what we account truth; and we should feel that we owe it to the interests of christianity, as well as to our personal religious interests, 'to serve God' in all things 'with a perfect heart and with a willing mind;' to 'walk in wisdom towards them who are without, in meekness instructing them that oppose themselves,' and steadily to practise that 'pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep ourselves unspotted from the world.' The work may be long in prosecution, to try the faith, or display the resources, or purify the zeal, or punish the remissness, or mature the graces of its friends; but, laboring thus for its advancement, we may well be content to await its consummation with a patient confidence.

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THE

BENEFICIAL TENDENCY

OF UNITARIANISM.

It has been sometimes urged against the doctrines of Unitarianism, that they cannot be true, because their effects are bad. Those who have made the objection, do not argue fairly: they do not fairly ascertain the fact; and they do not take into account those other causes, which may operate to produce the effects which they erroneously attribute to Unitarianism.

I say they do not fairly ascertain the fact, — that what they deem its effects are real, or, if real, that they are bad. Sometimes they set up as a standard of christian practice, and as a test of christian principle, some criterion, which the Gospel neither lays down nor sanctions, and which the Unitarian holds to be perverted or defective; and then, judging by this, they come to conclusions, which are utterly inconsistent with righteous judgment. And, still more frequently, they draw inferences as to the religious conduct of Unitarian professors, from casual expressions, in themselves unfounded or entirely misunderstood; and from a few cases, they form the most erroneous judgments of the religious views and conduct of Unitarians generally.

If any opinions naturally lead to a perversion or deficiency in christian duty, then the conduct of those who profess them may be regarded as a strong corroborative proof of their injurious tendency. But if the opinions have naturally no such tendency, the ill conduct of those who hold them must be assigned to some other cause. Our Lord does indeed say, that the tree is known by its fruits; but to apply the principle, we must not take the tree which does not bear the fruits. If a man's spirit and conduct be unchristian, his actuating principles must be bad; his heart cannot be right: but his religious sentiments must not be made responsible for his unchristian spirit and conduct, unless it can be shown that they have, in some way or other, led to them. A man's religious sentiments may be true, without affecting his practice; they may be false, without affecting his practice. Multitudes believe in Christianity, who have nothing of the Christian but the name; multitudes have believed in some of the wildest corruptions of Christianity, who have been Christians in deed and in truth. — As to what I deem the corruptions of Christianity, it may be truly said, that where these unhappily modify the views entertained of christian duty and the christian character, yet the grand practical truths of the Gospel have so powerful an influence in the heart, which is yielded up to the obedience and imitation of Christ Jesus, and is sincerely desirous to do the will of God, that errors connected with these truths only serve to perplex the understanding, and to play around the heart, without essentially perverting its affections and principles. And, on the other hand, where the be-

lief is scriptural, decided, and pure, yet the influence of the world and of bad habits and dispositions formed independently of that belief, as well as other causes which in individual cases are easily ascertained, often prevent its efficacy, and it has little or no share in the regulation of the heart and the guidance of the life.

I may here add, that many have avowed themselves Unitarians, not from any serious regard to christian truth and duty, or from serious examination of the evidence on which the doctrines of Unitarianism depend; but because these at once approve themselves to their understanding, and because the Unitarians lay no undue stress upon the external observances of piety, and none upon those excited states of feeling, in which some appear to place the essence of religion. Such persons sometimes have little regard to the practical tendency of the doctrines they profess; and if Unitarianism do not improve them, they will, in all probability, too often throw discredit upon the cause they avow.

When the deist urges against us the unchristian lives of professing Christians, we justly answer by inquiring if this is the fault of their religion; and we desire him to form his estimate of the practical value of Christianity, by its efficacy where the life is cordially and habitually shaped by its precepts, its spirit, its prospects, and its examples. Unitarianism asks for the same justice; and then it has nothing to fear. The merely speculative Unitarian, whose opinions as little affect his heart as the clothes do which he wears, cannot with justice be regarded as a specimen of the influence of Unitarian principles.

The argument from the conduct of those who hold

any opinions, to the truth or falsehood of the opinions themselves, is one which requires a judicious acquaintance with the springs of human action, extensive experience, and accurate observation. And even with all these, it can only afford a presumption, which can weigh nothing against direct proofs, and the plain and natural tendency of these opinions.

If I could not perceive as clearly as I do, the beneficial tendency of the great principles of Unitarianism, yet I should not hesitate to maintain it on the two following considerations: 1. That truth, under the government of a holy, wise, and benevolent Being, all whose ways are truth, must on the whole, be more productive of good than error can be : and 2. That our Lord himself, speaking of the FATHER AS THE ONLY TRUE GOD, represents it as *life eternal* to know Him, and Jesus Christ whom He sent. In these all-important words, the Unitarian's creed is comprised; and with the knowledge (undoubtedly the practical knowledge) of the truths they contain, our Lord connects eternal life.

But independently of these abstract considerations, I rejoice in the clear perception of its beneficial tendency. I see that Unitarianism embraces all the great motives of Christianity ; that it impedes the operation of none ; and that it frees the practical principles of the Gospel from the influence of doctrines, which, in their natural efficacy, impede or pervert them.

I. I consider it as a great excellence of UNITARIANISM, that it ENCOURAGES AND REWARDS THE SOUND EXERCISE OF THE UNDERSTANDING IN MATTERS OF RELIGION.

Unitarianism peculiarly falls in with the liberal and intellectual character of the Gospel, and of the instructions of Christ and his apostles. The religion of Christ is a religion of the heart, but it is also a religion of the understanding. Truth is the food, and divine truth the best food of the understanding ; 'to bear witness to the truth,' was the object (our Saviour himself says) 'for which he was born, for which he came forth into the world ;' and he prays that by the truth, God would sanctify his disciples.

The spirit of the gospel dispensation is admirably expressed in the words of the apostle Paul. 'I will pray with the spirit, I will pray with the understanding also ; I will sing with the spirit, I will sing with the understanding also.' —The Christian religion was designed, not as a temporary dispensation, but to last through every period of the world. It was of great importance, for its future acceptance and usefulness, that it should approve itself to the sound understanding ; that it should appear to all, who will seriously examine, to be indeed the *wisdom* of God unto salvation ; that it should be obvious to all who 'desire to do the will of God,' not only that grace, but that truth also came by Jesus Christ.

Some there are who value a doctrine in proportion to its obscurity : and those, who make religion a matter of the imagination and of strong feeling, rather than of solid conviction and of steady though lively christian affection and principle, might wish for more than 'the simplicity which is in Christ.' But where the judgment is duly exercised, and the imagination properly placed under its regulation, the disciple of Jesus must rejoice

when he sees the complete accordance of the truths of the Gospel with the dictates of the soundest understanding; and must feel grateful to the Father of lights, that the bright display of himself and his dispensations, which the Gospel affords, is not obscured by the impenetrable cloud of incomprehensibility. — Is it possible that the clear understanding of important truth can make it less interesting or less valuable?

Now if the Unitarian views of christian truth are correct, there is nothing in the scheme of the Gospel which it is difficult to understand. Those principles, which were most inconsistent with the prejudices of the Jews, and therefore to them most mysterious, are not so to us. On the contrary — though they may excite our admiration, and our adoration of the unsearchable wisdom of Him, who seeth the end from the beginning, and often chooseth means to execute his purposes which baffle human wisdom and presumption, — they contribute to bind the Gospel to the heart. That the blessings of the Gospel should be free to all, without distinction of Jew and Gentile, — free as the air we breathe, — and that they should be conveyed to us, not by the temporal prince and triumphant conqueror, but by the 'man of sorrows,' who through suffering and death became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey him, present to our minds nothing mysterious; but, on the contrary, more clearly display to our eyes the wisdom of Him, who is called 'the only wise God.'

I do not say, that Unitarianism entirely removes all difficulties from religion: I believe that difficulties will exist, as long as human excellence must include humility, trust, and resignation: and such is the admirable

adaptation of revelation to the wants of man, that these very difficulties are one cause of the attention which the mind pays to it, and which, where humbly and piously directed, is constantly rewarded by clearer and clearer perceptions of divine truth. But I do say, that Unitarianism removes the greatest and most oppressive difficulties, which have tended to prejudice the mind of thinking men against the Gospel. And though I would never relinquish a doctrine, proved by adequate evidence, merely because it is obscure, yet surely it is a presumption in favor of the divine origin of a doctrine, that it is clear and intelligible. — To many it may not be of any consequence whether they understand a thing or not. They may feel at perfect ease in receiving as true, from the authority of their parents and spiritual guides, that which they in no way profess to understand. But the more the mind is exercised, and the more knowledge on other subjects it acquires, the more it seeks to understand that which it is taught to believe; and the more extensively intellectual culture is diffused, the more generally will this want be experienced. In periods of spiritual darkness and spiritual slavery, the most absurd dogmas may be implicitly received; but where the light of knowledge beams on other subjects, and the rights of religious liberty and free inquiry are understood and exercised, the mind cannot rest in religious ignorance. And I do gratefully rejoice in the conviction, that, in the search after divine truth in the records and dictates of revelation, the understanding may not only find its noblest field for exercise, but will be rewarded with knowledge which, while it is healthy to the soul, will prove invigorating to its own noblest powers.

But I will not enlarge on this point, farther than by stating the positions which I had in view under this head, — viz. that the great principles of Unitarianism, (or, in other words, as I firmly believe, pure Christianity,) are easily understood : that they do not perplex and confound the understanding : that they are adapted to the intellectual wants of all, and especially of those for whom the Gospel was peculiarly designed, the poor and unlearned: that they relieve Christianity from those difficulties which erroneous views of it have caused, and which have led numbers to relinquish it : and that they make christian faith, where it has been founded on evidence, more firm and steady, by freeing it from the sources of doubt, and wavering, and perplexity. Such, I hesitate not in believing, have been the effects of Unitarianism in numerous instances. And I trust, under the blessing of God, such will be its effect, increasing in a rapid proportion.

II. Intimately connected with the foregoing remarks, is the important fact, that UNITARIAN CHRISTIANITY PRESENTS ONE OBJECT OF RELIGIOUS WORSHIP, ONE OBJECT OF THE HIGHEST AFFECTIONS OF THE HEART.

The perplexities experienced by the thinking mind in connexion with this essential point, have often been the cause of the examination and subsequent rejection of the popular doctrines. If there are three persons, or intelligent agents, each infinite, each possessed of all the adorable perfections which belong to God, — if, in short, there are three separate, distinct, infinite Minds, of one substance, power, and glory, each subsisting separately, and capable of being made, separate-

ly, the object of thought, and of religious worship, — (however much the mind may, by the aid of metaphysical subtilties, bring itself to believe that these three distinct infinite Minds or Persons are ONE GOD, and that by holding the existence of such three distinct Persons in the Godhead, the great principle of the divine unity is not violated,) — one thing is certain, that each being separately God, must be *the object of religious worship separately from the others.*

In accordance with this plain and necessary conclusion, prayers and other branches of religious worship, are offered up to each of the three Persons separately. The consistent Trinitarian, believing each Person to be truly God, and worshipping each separately, necessarily has three objects of worship. By what principle shall he regulate his devotions to each? If he rest satisfied with partial examination, still his mind is likely to be bewildered: but if he look into the Christian's directory, he there finds no precept directing the offering of religious worship to any other being but the Father: and, on the contrary, he finds numerous plain, direct declarations in the Law, and the Prophets, and the Gospel, confirmed most powerfully by the uniform example and instruction of our Saviour, all pointing to this great truth, that the FATHER is the *only* proper object of religious worship. If so, the conclusion necessarily follows, that HE is the only true GOD.

Through the embarrassment and perplexity with which, to the reflecting mind, Trinitarianism is often attended, respecting the direction of christian worship,

many have been led to consider the evidence of popular opinions, and to relinquish them for those plain fundamental truths which shine with clear and strong effulgence throughout the whole of revelation. And when they have embraced these, they have no longer any perplexity. Their devotions acquire a simplicity, which often adds to their fervency; and at least makes their devout affections steady and clear, and gives them the best prospect of shedding their influence over the whole tenor of life.

But, besides this consideration, there is another of great weight. Not merely are there, on popular doctrines, different objects of equal worship, but these have *different characters and offices assigned to them.* And it will generally be found, among those who hold the higher forms of what are called Evangelical doctrines, that he whom the Scriptures represent as the *effect* of God's love to mankind, is often thought of as the *cause*, the *procuring cause* of divine mercy; and thus that highest gratitude, which reason and revelation teach us is due to Jehovah, is diverted into a different channel. And can that commandment be then fulfilled, which our Saviour most solemnly sanctioned, when he said, 'The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One, and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength'?

I have indeed no doubt, that many who profess and believe Trinitarian sentiments, influenced by the plain principles, examples, and commands of the Gospel and of the Law, do, in practice, confine their worship, and the highest adoration of their hearts, to the Father, and

love Jehovah as the supreme object of their best affections: but then they are so far (that is, practically) Unitarians; and we can only wish that they were so in avowed profession.

On this point Unitarianism is unrivalled. While it affords abundant grounds of love to him, who bore in his character so eminent a resemblance to the moral excellences of the Supreme Being, and who was, under Him, the agent of communicating the richest gifts of divine mercy; while it warms the heart with gratitude to our Saviour, for his exertions and sufferings to insure and extend the blessed privileges of the Gospel; while it makes him the object of our faith and trust, as possessed of divine authority, sanctioned by the most signal marks of divine approbation; while it demands our reverence for him as the Son of God, as exalted to be the Lord of the dead and the living, and, under the appointment of God, to raise the dead and judge the world; it keeps clear and close to the great fundamental principle, 'Thou shalt worship Jehovah thy God, and to Him only shalt thou offer religious service:' it teaches us, (as the Scriptures teach us, and because the Scriptures teach us,) that He is the only true God, that we ought to pay religious worship to Him alone and that He is LOVE, and His love the source of every blessing, temporal and spiritual; — that He therefore should be the object of the highest love, and gratitude, and trust, and reverence and obedience.

III. It is a most important advantage of UNITARIANISM, that it THROWS NO IMPEDIMENT IN THE WAY OF THE GREAT PRACTICAL PRINCIPLES OF THE GOSPEL.

Though it ascribes no merit to works, and represents all rewards of faith and obedience as solely the gifts of divine grace, yet it lays, as the Gospel does, the utmost stress upon good works, i. e. *christian conduct springing from christian principles*, such as love to God and to mankind, love to Christ, the desire of imitating his example and obeying his precepts, the prospects of his Gospel, the dictates of conscience enlightened by christian duty, &c. From the necessity of a holy life and conversation to obtain the divine favor and final acceptance, Unitarianism presents nothing to draw off the mind: but, on the contrary, it lays the greatest, most steady, and most consistent stress upon this. It gives abundant hope to the broken and contrite heart; but it does not, through unhappy views of the work and merit of the Son of God, afford any room to delay the work of repentance, or to expect that strong and agonizing feelings, an appropriating faith in his merits, and inward assurance of pardon, will supply the place of a sober, righteous, and godly life.

Unitarian Christianity goes to the heart, and requires watchfulness and caution in the work of duty: it allows no value to actions, which do not spring from such principles within, as are conformable with the will of God: in short, it assigns its due place to faith, as a valuable practical conviction of the great truths of religion influencing the heart; but it does not lead away from attention to its influences, by making it consist in some mysterious inwrought feeling, which may be totally unproductive of that religious obedience, which we have the authority of our Saviour's precepts and his example to pronounce the sum and substance of religion.

It may not at once appear obvious, but to the reflecting mind I may safely leave the examination of the position, that strict practical adherence to the divine unity, and its direct consequences of the exclusive worship of the Father and His unpurchased, essential mercy, will necessarily lead to the adoption of those sound and consistent views of religion, which the instructions of our Saviour communicate; and to the eradication of those fallacious and baneful notions, which lead men to hope for some shorter and easier way to heaven than what he has pointed out to us.

The present popular views of Christianity have a direct tendency to make religion greatly consist in frames and feelings; or at least to represent these as essential tests of the state of the soul. Now these very much depend upon the constitution of the individual, upon the state of his bodily system at the time, upon the strength of his imagination, and other causes utterly independent of christian excellence. In proportion as this standard or test is adopted, the mind is led away from scriptural tests; and there is a great and natural leaning in the human mind to rest upon the former, which are obvious and easily applied, to the entire or partial exclusion of the latter. I do not think that this was so much the case with the Orthodox writers of past times (who seem to have had in view christian principle, more than the peculiarities of christian belief;) but if we are to judge by the publications, and discourses, and hymns of many belonging to what are termed the Evangelical classes at present, I think there is reason to believe that the tests of christian excellence, and grounds of the divine favor, are more now than formerly, a mysterious, inex-

plicable feeling, which they term faith, and the fervid emotions which are produced by the natural sympathy of the mind, and by excitements which may have a religious character, but which, as far at least as the individual is concerned, have nothing to do with religion.

'Religion,' as is excellently stated by one who knew its real power, but whose strong sensibilities and glowing ardor of expression may sometimes have contributed to propagate the very error of which I am speaking,—'Religion, in its most general view, is such a sense of God upon the soul, and such a conviction of our obligations to him, and of our dependence upon him, as shall engage us to make it our great care to conduct ourselves in a manner, which we have reason to believe will be pleasing to him.'* In such an account of it, I recognise the genuine spirit of the Christian: and to hinder this principle, in Unitarianism there is nothing; to excite it to action and give it influence, there is everything.

Unitarianism leads us to expect nothing from God without ourselves endeavoring to do his will. It places religion in the careful regulation of the heart and life by the spirit and precepts of Christ. It teaches us, most plainly and forcibly, that in the last great day 'every one shall bear his own burden;' that we must be rewarded or punished 'according as our works have been;' and that our situation in a future state of retribution will be exactly proportioned to the character and conduct of the individual, appreciated with the most unerring precision, by him who will judge the world in righteousness, under the guidance and wisdom of Him

* Doddridge's Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul.

who is all-wise. It encourages us to expect all needful aid and direction in the way of duty, in working out our salvation, in attaining the sanctification of the heart; but it presents no encouragement unless we do strive, and watch, and pray. It leads us to attend to the *formation of habits*, because it encourages no presumptuous hopes of miraculous interference to make the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots. It leads us, too, *to begin early;* and I cannot doubt, that the infinite importance of early attention to the religious and moral regulation of the character, is among none so strongly urged by their principles, as among the Unitarians.

In fine, the Unitarian views of christian duty, and the way in which its requirements are to be discharged, and of the terms of salvation, — though not so encouraging to indolence, to spiritual pride, and to sinful presumption, as I believe those presented by popular doctrines are in their natural tendency and frequent effects, — are *safe* and *secure:* they fully accord with the representations of him who left us an example that we should follow in his steps; and who made it his highest aim, and regarded it as his highest honor, to do the will of the Father who sent him, and to finish his work.

IV. UNITARIANISM THROWS NO IMPEDIMENT IN THE WAY OF CHRISTIAN LIBERALITY AND AFFECTION.

I do not see how it is possible to hold the doctrines of Unitarianism, and yet maintain that the favor of God and eternal salvation are confined to the narrow limits of sect and party. True it is, we are taught that there is 'no other name under heaven *given* among men, by which we must be saved,' — that God has seen fit to

propose no other terms of salvation to mankind, than those of the Gospel, and to appoint no other Mediator to convey the blessings of the New Covenant; and therefore that no one can possess those inestimable blessings on the secure ground of *divine promise*, but through faith in Christ. But the Unitarian rejoices in the conviction that, 'in every nation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness will be accepted by Him;' and that He who 'hath appointed to men the bounds of their habitation,' and given them their various talents, will accept them according to what they have, and not according to what they have not. If the untaught Heathen, or the deluded Mahommedan, to whom the light of the Gospel has never been offered, do, according to the light they possess, faithfully obey the dictates of conscience, serving and loving the Deity as known to them, I cannot doubt that He who is the common Parent of all, will grant them here increasing light in the way of duty, and some portion of those present rewards which He has graciously connected with well-doing; and that in the future world He will make them partakers of blessings, of which millions of them have never heard, and unite them under him who must reign till all enemies are put under his feet. Too highly prizing the inestimable privileges, the sanctifying principles, the gracious hopes, the strengthening, healing consolations of the Gospel, to feel otherwise than an earnest desire that they may be diffused to all who share the gift of reason, — feeling it his duty, (the debt of gratitude which he owes to the Author of all good, and to the friend and benefactor who shed his blood to communicate, assure, and extend, the blessings which

he himself possesses, and the debt of love which he owes to all his brethren of mankind,) to contribute his efforts to the arrival of that period, when the name of God shall be universally hallowed, and His will done on earth as it is done in heaven, when all shall know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent, — and rejoicing in all that is wisely done by others to promote the glory of God, — the Unitarian has more honorable notions of the God of love, than to imagine that He will make hundreds and thousands of millions miserable forever, solely because they do not receive him as their Saviour, whose name they have never heard.

But the worst influences of this tenet on the christian character, are seen in the more limited relations and connexions of life. It is the parent of uncharitableness, and the foster-mother of persecution. To view ourselves as the exclusive objects of the divine favor, and all who do not entertain our views of christian faith as the objects of God's wrath and indignation, is not only injurious to his character, but has the direct tendency to generate spiritual pride, and to check the best affections of the heart toward those who differ from us. To account those our enemies who are, as we think, the enemies of God, is no part of Christianity; and those doctrines which lead to this estimation, lose the grand characteristic of the Gospel, while they destroy its delightful features as proceeding from the Father and Lord of all.

I rejoice in the belief, that multitudes of those who now, through the influence of human creeds, consign the Unitarian to eternal perdition, will hereafter stretch

to him the right hand of christian friendship, if he have the happiness to join them where, not for their unchristian errors, but for their christian obedience, I doubt not they will gain admission. But the unhappy notion, which they have of exclusive salvation, makes them here look upon him with unkind suspicion as to his motives and his conduct, prevents them from listening to his reasons, and induces them to place a barrier (too often insuperable) against the admission of the simple truths of the Gospel by those who are under their influence.

An eminent christian philosopher, lately deceased, (who, in his life and when going down the dark valley of death, showed the genuine influence and value of his Unitarian principles,) informs us, that when a most excellent and dutiful son, from conscientious motives in opposition to his interests, renounced the religious system in which he had been educated, for another which he deemed more consonant to truth, his pious mother told him, that she found it to be her duty, however severe the struggle, to alienate her affections from him, now that he had rendered himself an enemy to God by embracing such erroneous sentiments; and she succeeded in this sacrifice of nature's feelings and scrupulously performed what she believed her duty, to the end of her days. Would not the heart of this good woman have been almost overwhelmed with delight, if she could have seen that we become enemies to God only by wicked works; and that, at the last great day, the inquiry will not be, What have you believed? but, Have you improved your talents? have you lived a sober, righteous and godly life? have you done justice, loved

mercy, and walked humbly with your God? have you lived as in his sight, followed the example of your Lord, and kept yourself unspotted from the world?*

The Unitarian sees that error on religious subjects must be injurious: that if its influence is prevented in the hearts of some, it will be injurious, directly or indirectly, to others: he is satisfied that truth connected with the character and dealings of God must do good; and that it is his duty to do what in him lies to diffuse it. He believes that he is thereby offering an acceptable service to the God of truth; imitating the example of him who came to bear witness to the truth; and contributing to glorify God in all things by Christ Jesus. But God forbid that he should ever suppose, that piety and other christian graces are confined to any religious denomination; or imagine himself better than another, because his views of christian truth are more pure.

Unitarianism does a vast service to the cause of christian charity, by levelling those narrow fences within which modern Orthodoxy confines all that is truly good and excellent. It thus disposes us to give the right hand of fellowship to all, whose dispositions and conduct show that they have sat at the feet of Jesus. It destroys all those narrowing views, which so often interfere with the great objects of benevolence; and it disposes to cooperate with all who have them in view, and to think well of them, when they separate from us and we from them, to promote respectively our more limited opinions.

By the man who has drunk deeply in the spirit of

* The fact above stated is given by the late Dr Cogan.

that Saviour who loved all mankind without distinction of name or country, — who has imbibed the principles of that religion which teaches us that love is the fulfilling of the law (of social duty), that without charity we are but as sounding brass or tinkling cymbals, and that the end of the commandments is 'charity out of a pure heart and faith unfeigned,' — must it not be deemed a recommendation of any set of doctrines, and a presumption in favor of their being Christianity itself, that they promote these its grand essential qualities, and clear the way for their full exercise?

V. Unitarianism shines forth resplendently, in respect to the character and dispensations of the great Father of all.

The light of the Gospel hath not entirely dispelled the clouds and darkness, which human weakness and imperfection throw around the ways of God; and Unitarianism cannot do more; but much that Unitarianism opposes, involves them in greater darkness, or, should I not say, in gloom? Gloomy indeed are those representations of the righteous Judge of the whole earth, which present him to us as every revolving year allowing tens of millions of those, to whom His spirit hath given understanding, to go out of life, and fall into eternal misery, for want of that knowledge which His word could at once afford them, or of that grace which He who hath access to the heart could at once communicate. Terrific indeed are those doctrines, which teach us that His wrath could not be expiated, till its full vials had been emptied on the head of the merciful Redeemer of men; or that His justice could not be satisfied

till an innocent person had been punished in the place of the guilty. He who can dare to hope, that, among the millions and millions who forever and ever must view their Creator only as the avenging Lawgiver and Judge, he stands secure from his awful indignation, may sing the hymn of gratitude for himself; but will not human weakness shrink back with horror at the prospect, that a time will come, when the ties which here bound him to all mankind, as the children of one common Father, — the ties which bound him to those whom he saw doing good to men, and, as far as he could judge, obeying God, (ties which to feel was honorable,) the ties which bound him with closer affections to friend or relative, and even those which are formed by the nearest domestic relations, — shall all be severed forever, even where the only crime was unavoidable ignorance, or even where the friend or relative, the husband or the son, had in view, in the general tenor of his conduct, to live as in the sight of God, and with respect to the last great account? Will the expectation of individual happiness make the groans unheard, of misery unutterable, without alleviation, irremediable, and endless?

If this be Orthodoxy, no wonder that he, who sees written in the law of Moses, 'the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious,' — who sees in the Prophets that Jehovah 'desireth not the death of the sinner,' — who hears the apostles speaking of the kindness and grace of God, — who hears his venerated Lord declare that 'He is kind even to the unthankful and the evil,' — who reads in the book of nature that 'the Lord is good unto all and his tender mercies are over all his works,' — and who sees inscribed in unfading characters in the ever-

lasting Gospel that 'God is love' — no wonder that he pronounces that it is not Christianity.

I once asked a Unitarian friend, who while among the Wesleyan Methodists had manifested the spirit of devotion, if she found her piety impeded, or its fervor lessened, by her change of sentiments? Oh, no! she replied: and she went on, with simple, serious feeling, to tell me with what unmingled delight and unembarrassed love she now contemplated the perfections and dealings of her Heavenly Father, how much more she now possessed to feed the purest flame of devotion. And it must be so. Certainly the doctrines of Unitarianism bring home 'the terror of the Lord.' They show that the holiness of God cannot look upon sin but with abhorrence; they show that His faithfulness and justice are concerned to punish the impenitent and disobedient; they teach us that His judgments will be administered with impartial equity, that every one shall reap as he now sows, and that rewards or punishments shall be awarded according as our works have been: they impress the soul, therefore, with reverential awe of that great Being, who is Almighty, All-wise, All-holy, All-just, our Omniscient Witness, and our Final Judge: they will not allow of irreverence or familiarity towards the Infinite and adorable Majesty of heaven and earth. But at the same time, they present everything to enable us to offer to him the best affections of the heart. They teach us, in an especial manner, to view God as our Father; and in this, the most delightful and comprehensive appellation, (that in which our Saviour so continually represents the Great Being who sent him, and under which he teaches us to call upon Him), they include

everything that can encourage, that can animate, that can console, that can prompt to submission, to reverence, to love, to gratitude, to trust, to the best tribute of prayer and praise, of adoration, resignation, and obedience : and by this endearing representation, they give us, as the Scriptures do, from which they are derived, the pledge of parental love, of parental care, of parental guidance, of parental chastisements indeed, but also of parental mercy.

I well know that every Christian uses the appellation FATHER, and that he considers the Supreme Being as standing in this relation: but I ask, is it not at utter variance with those doctrines which make the *infinite satisfaction* of the Son of God the sole ground on which the sinner can rest his hopes ; which represent the death of Christ as appeasing the wrath of God ; which talk of God standing upon full satisfaction and not remitting one sin without it, of the blood of Christ calming the Father's frowning face, of Jesus forcing Him to spare, &c? To my mind it is clear, that if the discourses of Jesus and his apostles have divine authority, those doctrines have not ; and that he who, though in words adopting the latter, keeps close in thought and feeling to the former, is in reality a Unitarian at heart, even if he never heard the appellation.

Now Unitarianism presents nothing to interfere with these heart inspiring representations of the paternal character of God. It teaches us, indeed, that our heavenly Father will, for the good of his large family, support his authority, and will punish the impenitent offender ; it teaches us that in the future state he will exercise a righteous retribution, and that guilt and misery

will never be separated: but it also teaches that in judgment he remembers mercy; that when he sees his paternal chastisements have done their work, and perceives the tokens of genuine and full repentance, he wants no satisfaction, no punishment; but receives his wandering child to duty and to himself: and if still he leave him to feel the present consequences of his folly and disobedience, he cheers him with that hope which is an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast. It teaches us, too, that in compassion to the weakness and necessities of his creatures, he has given us the assured promise and pledge of his pardoning grace: that he set forth a mercy-seat, where his gracious purposes might be fully made known; and, to strengthen the pledge, and to make it evident to all that the covenant was sure, by his all-wise appointment that mercy-seat was sprinkled with blood, — the blood of the new covenant, — the blood of Christ, 'as of a lamb without spot and blemish.' In fine, it teaches us, in the words of inspired truth, that God is love; that because he is love, he sent his Son to save the world, and that since he spared him not, but 'freely delivered him up for us all,' we may rest assured of his readiness to give everything truly needful to his servants and children. By thus representing the Lord of heaven and earth, the Unitarian doctrine, following its great teacher, displays a throne of grace with a merciful though righteous Sovereign seated on it, and that Sovereign our father.

I am sure that piety is confined to no sect or party. Wherever there is gratitude, and trust, and resignation, and love, and the principle of obedience towards God even the Father, there is piety. I rejoice to catch

something of their spirit, who have imbibed the spirit of Christ, (which was piety in its purest form,) whether or not their doctrinal views agree with mine. In the ardor which animates them for the glory of God, and the cause of our common Lord, I desire to partake. Gladly should I possess the talent and the opportunity to try the genuine effect of the simple principles of the Gospel, where they think that good is done by what I deem of human invention. And in their work and service for the spiritual welfare of our fellow-creatures, I desire to judge of them, as I wish them to judge of me in mine. But confidently regarding the great principles of Unitarianism as the truth as it is in Jesus, — as the same that were known, though in a more limited degree, by those who in the Old Testament show us the genuine spirit of piety and devotion, — as the same that we witness in the New Testament, producing the noblest indications of piety in our Lord and his apostles, animating them in the great work of duty and pious benevolence, — I cannot for a moment admit, that Unitarianism is deficient, unless the Gospel is, in the sources of piety. And as I owe to Unitarianism, and to that alone, whatever I have of piety and christian feeling, and have known and often witnessed its influence in leading to the highest exercises, and, still more, to the most habitual influence of piety, strengthening in the hour of trial, supporting in affliction, raising in humiliation and contrition, animating in the work of duty, keeping in the love of God, smoothing the pillow of pain, and giving solid peace, and tranquil, nay, even joyful hope in the hour of death — I here enter a solemn protest against the misrepresentations of the ignorant or the bigoted, and de-

clare it to be my full conviction, that Unitarianism, in its genuine influence, promotes and includes the spirit of piety; and that if a man, professing its principles, is destitute of the spirit of piety, he is, in reality, no more a Unitarian than he is a Christian.

With these convictions, increasing as I examine the subject and consider the principles, spirit, and operation of the Gospel, I cannot but identify the cause of Unitarianism with that of the Gospel itself. I rejoice in the belief that the Bible Christian, whatever unhappy notions he may have imbibed from human sources, so far as he keeps close to the great fundamental truths of the Gospel, and shapes his practice and moulds his spirit by it, is promoting by his life and by his instructions, the cause which I deem christian truth. Motives may be added to the simplicity that is in Christ, which for a time may operate to draw away from its genuine influence; but he who leads men to sit at the feet of Jesus, and to learn of him the words of everlasting life, will make them wise unto salvation; and if they do not see the resplendent truths of the essential mercy and unrivalled supremacy of the One God, while here upon earth, they will be prepared to see them where there will be no clouds of ignorance or imperfection.

As I believe that Unitarianism is pure Christianity, and am sure that Jesus will reign till all 'people, nations, and languages, shall serve him,' I look forward with cheering conviction to the universal prevalence of Unitarianism; and when I turn to the language of divine prophecy, I see the same expressly taught in the sacred pages, where they declare, 'And Jehovah shall

be king over all the earth ; in that day shall there be one Jehovah,' *in that day* JEHOVAH *shall be* ONE, ' and *his name one*.' According to my full conviction, this passage cannot have its complete accomplishment, till the proper unity of God is universally acknowledged ; till all the followers of that Master who prayed to the *Father* as the *only true God*, shall pay undivided and unrivalled honors to Jehovah, his Father and our Father, his God and our God.

That time is not yet. When the pious disciple of Jesus looks around and perceives the greatest part of the world still ignorant of the Gospel, and sees it, where it is received, so little employed to regulate the heart and the life, he is prone to be impatient, and for a moment perhaps to doubt the promise of his coming. And just so the Unitarian, dispirited by opposition, by obloquy, and by misrepresentation, is apt to let disappointed feelings overcome him, and check him in the diffusion of christian light. But God's time is best. What we have to do, is, to work in our respective spheres to promote the cause of christian truth and duty. If we can do no more, it may cheer us to remember that ' they also serve who only stand and wait.' We know that the great work is to be accomplished, and by human means ; and we should ever have our eyes open to observe what opportunities our heavenly Father, in his providence, affords us to work with him.

Far be it from me to wish that the Unitarian should be always endeavoring to extend his doctrines controversially. Great good is done, if the plain, impressive, practical principles of the Gospel, the simple truths of the Scriptures, are communicated *influentially*, without

the doctrines which tend, as far as they operate, to impede their influence. And above all it should be remembered, that Unitarianism will not spread through the christian world, till Unitarians take care that their light so shine before men, that others seeing their good works, may be led to glorify their Father who is in heaven.' A Unitarian professor leading an ungodly life, and in proportion as he does so, — in proportion as he forsakes the spirit, and example, and precepts of his Lord, — does more to check the progress of truth, than his most zealous and public profession of it can do good.

And here, among other things, I draw encouragement respecting the spread of Unitarianism. Its great doctrines are now among numbers confessed practically. Unitarians are becoming, in their views, and I trust in their practical principles, more and more evangelical, in the best sense of the term. It will promote this most desirable result, that they have, in various instances, and in a painful degree, been made the objects of reproach, of bitter attempts to injure them in their interests, their reputation, their usefulness, and their peace, because they embrace what the world calls heresy. It will make them more watchful and circumspect, that they give not occasion to the enemies of truth to speak evil of it on their account. When Unitarians show in their lives the pure and active influence of the truths they profess, and live not according to the corrupt maxims and example of the world, their cause *will* go on and prosper.

And notwithstanding the impediments it has from within and from without, it is prospering. Like the

cause with which I cannot but identify it, it does, it will, experience fluctuation ; and those who see the waves retiring in one place, may not be aware how much they are moving onward in another. In various instances of frequent and extensive occurrence, the Unitarian controversy has gradually lowered the tone of Orthodoxy. The fact has been brought before the public, which has long been known to individuals, that in the very cradle of Calvinism what many here call the essential doctrines of the Gospel are virtually abandoned. And though I do anticipate that the absurd efforts which are made there to prevent free inquiry, and which show the danger of arming the professors of religion, however pure, with temporal authority, will defeat their object, and give opposing principles a power which they would not otherwise possess ; yet I cannot see any reason to apprehend that their power will extend farther than to make *that* genuine Unitarianism, which unhappily is yet mixed with something of the old leaven. — But what, for the present, I feel the most encouraging circumstance of all, is, that in various parts of our own land, many thinking, intelligent men, of christian principles and genuine piety, among that class who are least likely to be influenced by worldly motives, have been gradually embracing and then openly avowing Unitarian principles, led to them by the simple study of the Scriptures, and often without knowing that there were any in the world who held the same views of christian truth with themselves.

When such men as these go back again, then may the Unitarian advocate be staggered ; but when he sees persons of all ranks, and especially among those

whose circumstances have most led them to the close study of the Scriptures, leaving the principles of childhood, after cautious, serious investigation, and often, in consequence of their avowal of obnoxious truth, subjected to many worldly privations and great discouragements, and yet rejoicing in the light they possess, desirous to impart it to others, and, above all, solicitous to display its influence in their lives, he feels that he is not laboring alone. While he is aiming to promote the glory of God, and the great ends for which his Saviour came forth from the Father, and for which he shed his blood, he knows that God's truth must be omnipotent; he knows that he must add to it no human admixture; he knows that, to promote it he must employ no unholy weapons; and he goes on in the work of reformation, with humble hope that he has his Lord's approbation, while in his name he endeavors to diffuse that knowledge which is the way to eternal life, while in his name he teaches men to 'know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent,'—while in his name he contributes to the arrival of the period, when the kingdom of Christ, the kingdom of God, shall extend over the whole earth,—when 'Jehovah shall be one, and his name one,'—when everywhere the name of God shall 'be hallowed, and his will done on earth, as it is done in heaven.'

1st Series. No. 44.

AN

EXPLANATION

OF THE WORDS

'BY NATURE CHILDREN OF WRATH;'

FOUND IN EPHESIANS, II. 3.

F. A. Farley

SECOND EDITION.

PRINTED FOR THE

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EXPLANATION

OF

EPHESIANS II. 3.

And were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

WHAT did the Apostle mean by the phrase, 'by nature the children of wrath'? That 'man in his state of innocence had freedom and power to will and to do that which was good; and that by his fall he hath wholly lost all ability to will any spiritual good accompanying salvation, so as a natural man he is utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, dead in sin, and is not able by his own strength to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto?' — 'In the primitive state of innocence, man was endowed with freedom of the will, which was lost when he sinned; his descendants are born into the world inheriting his nature, in its fallen state, despoiled of that power over the will which he enjoyed at first; and without the grace of God, man has only the power of doing evil.' 'Previous to regeneration, men are dead, morally dead — dead in a moral sense, as to spiritual things, in all the powers and faculties of their souls: they have no more knowledge of them, affection for them, will to them, or power to perform them, than a dead man has with respect to things

natural.' 'So long as men are in their natural state, they not only have no good thing, but it is impossible they should have or do any good thing.' 'The nature of man is wholly infected with enmity against God. Every faculty and principle of action is wholly under the dominion of enmity against God. Every faculty is entirely and perfectly subdued under it, and enslaved by it. The understanding is under the reigning power of this enmity. The will is wholly under the reigning power of it. All the affections are governed by enmity against God: — there is not one affection, nor one desire, that a natural man has, or that he is ever stirred up to act from, but what contains in it enmity against God. A natural man is as full of enmity against God, as any viper, or any venomous beast is full of poison.' 'Man by nature is unholy, and cannot relish or even discern the excellency of true religion. He can neither repent, submit, believe, love, nor obey — but must remain a rebel, an enemy,' &c. 'There is in the dead body no power to return to life; neither is there in the soul any ability to attain a spiritual life, or the exercise of holy affection toward God. There is in the dead body no spark of life, that time or care may fan into a flame; it will remain a corpse; nothing but the power of God can raise it from the dead. In like manner, there is in the natural man no latent principle of spiritual life; without a divine intercessor he must ever remain as he is: no good education, no good resolutions as they are called, will ever make him a good man, except there be a superadded principle from above, a change wrought in him by an eternal agent, life put into him by the spirit of God. He is born guilty, he is a child of wrath.

Antecedently to our works, or even moral agency, even in infancy, we are under the wrath of God!'

Brethren, do you believe all this fully, thoroughly, in your hearts? If so, you can have no doubt what is meant by 'being by nature the children of wrath!' But do you disbelieve it? I have given you the very language of the Westminster divines, and of Calvin, their great master, of Gill, and Edwards, and Scott, and Henry Martyn, — and will you not believe what such renowned, and learned, and pious men have said? I hope that you do not believe what they have said upon this subject. For myself, did I believe it, I might further follow one of these eminent men whom I have quoted, and while I viewed the unregenerate sinner, 'hanging by a slender thread, with the flames of divine wrath flashing around, ready every moment to burn it asunder,' might urge upon him 'the utter impossibility of his doing anything to effect his escape from the danger.' 'You have nothing to lay hold of to save yourself — nothing to keep off the flames of wrath — nothing of your own, nothing that you ever have done, nothing that you can do, to induce God to spare you one moment!'

This is a view, which a vast proportion of our christian brethren profess to believe! I say, profess; for it is inconceivable to my mind, that any man can really believe thus — that he can be convinced that the word of God, which to my soul speaks a far different and more endearing language, should utter such appalling language to his! And yet men will sit patiently and hear it, and receive it as the doctrine of holy Scripture! God forbid, that I should charge those, who differ from

me in doctrinal sentiment, with hypocrisy upon the momentous topics connected with human salvation. They may, nevertheless, deceive themselves, and be deceived; and a thousand causes may operate upon their minds to flatter or seduce them into error, and lead them to suppose they really believe, what they have never had occasion to doubt or to question.

I have thus exhibited one way of interpreting the phrase, 'children of wrath.' This text is one of the strongest holds, in which the defenders of the doctrine of original depravity are used to entrench themselves; and yet it really teaches no such thing. The Apostle meant to teach no such thing; and the whole mistake has arisen from a misconception, or a keeping out of sight, of one of the objects of the Epistle, and breaking up the connexion of the passage with the context.

Before entering upon its explanation, let me premise, that men are too apt, in reading the Epistles, to lose sight of the true nature of epistolary writing; of which this is an important feature; — that the writer always takes for known the existence of many circumstances relating to himself, or to those he addresses; — and this, to a stranger, may of itself be a cause of considerable obscurity. It is then always important to know and to regard, as far as possible, the history and other circumstances of both parties, would we understand thoroughly a letter not immediately concerning ourselves. This rule applies to the Epistles of Paul.

The passage is taken from the Epistle to the Ephesians. Ephesus was the capital of Asia Minor; celebrated for its extensive commerce and great wealth, and

for the magnificent temple of its patron goddess Diana. It was inhabited by a luxurious, an extremely dissolute and idolatrous population, who were also remarkably attached to the superstitious arts of magic and divination. The Apostle had visited their city twice, as we learn from St Luke's history ; and it is probable, that it was during the second visit, which has been computed by commentators to have occupied three years, that he gathered the Ephesian church. While a prisoner at Rome, he wrote this Epistle, to secure them against the pernicious doctrines, which the Judaizing and other false teachers were endeavoring to introduce. It is sufficient for the explanation of the verse before us to remark, then, that in the early part of the Epistle he contrasts their present state as professed and adopted Christians, with their former state while unconverted Jews, or heathens ; and this will furnish a clue to the three first chapters.

Now, bearing this simple view in mind, nothing can be plainer than that the Apostle had no intention of teaching, or even implying the doctrine of 'original sin,' and that these words furnish no proof of a hereditary moral corruption, total or partial. They relate not to natural, but acquired corruption — not a corruption of nature, i. e. natural constitution, but of habits and conduct. Paul is speaking of the state of all men, Jews as well as heathens, *previously to their embracing Christianity*. And he says, that in that state they were 'children of wrath,' or deserving of wrath. Why? Not because their Maker had introduced them into the world in such a state, but that they had *made themselves* such, by their impurities, licentiousness and sin ; by conform-

ing to 'the pernicious customs, habits, and practices of that state, into which they were born — which,' as has been well observed, 'was a state of nature, as compared with the state of grace, into which they were introduced by Christianity.' By the mere circumstance of birth they were in that state of nature, which was so different from the state of grace, which the gospel conferred. They came into the world innocent, but surrounded by temptations, to which they yielded, and were thus rightly considered as morally 'dead in trespasses and sins'; under the example of idolaters, they became idolatrous, they followed the dissolute, they gave themselves up to 'the lusts of the flesh,' and were thus styled 'by nature,' i. e. by the very circumstances into which they were born, and to which they surrendered themselves, 'children of wrath.' And the Apostle leads them to contrast this, their former condition, with their present condition, in 'which in Christ Jesus they who some time were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ' — they, who were destitute of the knowledge of God and of his Son, strangers to true holiness, idolaters, profligate, slaves of passion and lust, are now brought into the common fold of the Great Shepherd, and blessed with gospel light and gospel privileges. They were not 'children of wrath,' because their natural constitution was corrupt and fallen. The expression has nothing to do with natural constitution; it refers only to the position, or condition, or situation, into which they entered when born into the world. We might say in the same sense, that men born in a christian land are 'by nature' Christians, or those in a heathen land are 'by nature' heathens; and in either case, we should not

mean to praise the one, or blame the other ; their merit or their demerit would still remain an unsettled question. While indeed we consider the case of him, who is born to a participation of christian privileges, infinitely preferable to that of the other, we are also sure that of him to whom much is given much will be required, and that his guilt, if he neglect to profit by them, will be proportionably enhanced.

The passage derives further illustration from a careful inspection of the whole context. That the Apostle, in using this strong language, had all along in view a comparison of the state of the Ephesians while unconverted Jews or heathens with their state now that they had become avowed Christians, and had not the least reference to any inherited corruption of their nature, will thus appear very evident. In the succeeding verses, he speaks of them in their former state, as 'dead in sins,' but now, 'quickened together with Christ' — 'raised up' — 'made to sit together in heavenly places ;' in their former state, as 'aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenants of promise, far off, having no hope, and without God in the world,' — but now, 'in Christ Jesus, made nigh by the blood of Christ ;' in their former state, 'strangers and foreigners,' — but now, 'fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.' So in the beginning of the chapter, he spoke of them in their former state, as 'being dead in trespasses and sins,' as 'having walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air,' as having 'had their conversation in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and by nature the

children of wrath,' — but now, as being by 'God who is rich in mercy, quickened, — saved by grace,' i. e. by his free favor, or good pleasure, — 'raised, — created in Christ Jesus unto good works.' Here we perceive, that the Apostle has applied the most glowing figurative language to a change, not of their natural constitution, but of the state into which they had been born, and in which they had corrupted themselves. He even styles the change of their situation, a 'resurrection,' a 'new creation.' He seems to have thought that he could use no language sufficiently strong to express the inestimable advantages they now enjoyed, or the shocking bondage from which they had escaped.

There is one thing further to be remarked. This language is used in relation to the whole body of the Ephesian Christians, and not to the personal condition of any individuals among them. Those who advocate the doctrine of original sin will admit this position, so far as it applies to this passage and to all the context which corresponds to it in sentiment; but when it comes to the other side of the comparison, they will insist that the Apostle alludes only to the regenerate and elect Christians. But what color is there for this distinction? Not the least. St Paul gives not the most distant hint of such a thing. His language is as unqualified on the one side as on the other. Yet it would be going great lengths to say, that we must suppose every individual of the Ephesian church to have been in that state, which is called by the advocates of this doctrine, regenerate, elected, saved. If then we cannot believe this, and if, at the same time, we are convinced, that the language of the Apostle is as unqualified as we have stated, there

will remain little doubt but that the view already taken of his meaning is the true one, namely, that he had reference solely to a comparison of their former situation as Jews or heathens, and their present situation as professed Christians — that it was a comparison of advantages, means, privileges alone ; and that by a faithful, though eloquent delineation of the invaluable superiority of those which they now enjoyed, he might suggest the most powerful motives to them to 'walk worthy of the vocation, wherewith they were called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.'

May we not now fairly conclude, that the doctrine of original sin is not to be found in the passage we have considered ? And if so — if the very strong language, which there occurs, does not teach it, — the probability that it is nowhere taught in Scripture, is vastly strengthened.

In conclusion, let me remark, that the doctrine is wholly at variance with the moral perfections of God. If we are totally depraved at birth, God must have made us so. If we bring into this world an irresistible proneness to moral evil, or sin, that proneness is to be ascribed to the gift of God. Our nature, whatever it be, is the gift of God. Wherein, then, can consist human guilt in the sight of God ? Will a just God punish his creature for being what he made him ? Will a merciful God blame him because he does not overcome an irresistible propensity ? You perceive at once to what monstrous consequences the doctrine would lead us. If, however, we are created innocent — if we come into this world

alike destitute of holiness and sin, if we have light given us wherewith to distinguish right from wrong, and if we have the ability to choose and to practise the one or the other, — then, and then alone are we accountable beings — then, and then alone we are justly the subjects of a moral government — then we are deserving of applause or censure, of reward or punishment. And this we do believe. 'God made man upright, but he sought out many inventions.' We were created innocent; if we are depraved, it is our own fault, and we must justly receive the recompense of our depravity. How vastly more efficient this view of the subject is in restraining from sin, I trust, needs not be shown. Remember, then, that you have no apology for your guilt, in the inability and corruption of your nature; *that* was given you in unsullied purity, and nothing but your own, personal, individual sin, can stain it. You have never been, in the sense in which the Ephesians were, 'children of wrath,' for you have been born and bred under the sacred light and institutions of Christianity: — but there is a worse sense, in which you may answer to the language of the text — in which you may be 'children of wrath,' 'aliens,' 'strangers,' 'without hope, without God in the world!' If you are, or become so, how much more aggravated will be your guilt! how much more awful your condemnation! May God preserve us all from such corruption! the only kind of corruption which we need dread, as it is the only kind for which we could be blamed — a corruption, which would wither all that is lovely in human character, and elevated in human virtue, and which must inevitably bring shame and misery on the soul!

1st Series. No. 45.

AN

ESSAY

FOR THE UNDERSTANDING

OF

ST. PAUL'S EPISTLES.

BY JOHN LOCKE.

PRINTED FOR THE

American Unitarian Association.

BOSTON:

GRAY AND BOWEN, 141 WASHINGTON STREET.

MARCH, 1831.

Price 4 Cents.

This tract originally appeared as the Preface to Locke's 'Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistles of St Paul to the Galatians, Corinthians, Romans and Ephesians.' It is a matter alike of surprise and regret, that the volume has never been republished in this country. The preface has been twice reprinted here; once in a little book, containing besides this, Le Clerc's treatise on Inspiration; and again in the last number of the excellent 'Collection of Essays and Tracts in Theology,' edited by Mr Sparks. As the circulation of the latter work was confined to a comparatively small number of subscribers, and as the other reprint of this Essay is now seldom to be found, the Exec. Comm. of the Amer. Unit. Assoc. have thought that they should render a service to the community by placing it among their tracts. Some passages, not essential to the purpose or connexion of the Essay have been omitted, to bring the whole within the most convenient number of pages.

PRINTED BY I. R. BUTTS, BOSTON.

AN ESSAY

FOR THE UNDERSTANDING

OF

ST. PAUL'S EPISTLES.

THOUGH I had been conversant in St Paul's Epistles, as well as in other parts of sacred Scripture, yet I found that I understood them not; I mean, the doctrinal and discursive parts of them; though the practical directions, which are usually dropped in the latter part of each Epistle, appeared to me very plain, intelligible, and instructive.

I did not, when I reflected on it, very much wonder that this part of sacred Scripture had difficulties in it; many causes of obscurity did really occur to me. The nature of epistolary writings, in general, disposes the writer to pass by the mentioning of many things, as well known to him to whom his letter is addressed, which are necessary to be laid open to a stranger to make him comprehend what is said; and it not seldom falls out, that a well penned letter, which is very easy and intelligible to the receiver, is very obscure to a stranger, who hardly knows what to make of it. The

matters that St Paul wrote about, were certainly things well known to those he wrote to, and which they had some peculiar concern in; which made them easily apprehend his meaning, and see the tendency and force of his discourse. But we having now, at this distance, no information of the occasion of his writing, little or no knowledge of the temper and circumstances those he wrote to were in, but what is to be gathered out of the Epistles themselves, it is not strange that many things in them lie concealed to us, which, no doubt, they who were concerned in the letter understood at first sight. Add to this, that in many places it is manifest, he answers letters sent, and questions proposed to him; which, if we had, would much better clear those passages that relate to them, than all the learned notes of critics and commentators, who in after times fill us with their conjectures; for very often, as to the matter in hand, they are nothing else.

The language wherein these Epistles are written, is another, and that no small occasion of their obscurity to us now. The words are Greek, a language dead many ages since; a language of a very witty, volatile people, seekers after novelty and abounding with a variety of notions and sects, to which they applied the terms of their common tongue with great liberty and variety; and yet this makes but one small part of the difficulty in the language of these Epistles; there is a peculiarity in it, that much more obscures and perplexes the meaning of these writings, than what can be occasioned by the looseness and variety of the Greek tongue. The terms are Greek, but the idiom or turn of the phrases may be truly said to be Hebrew, or

Syriac; the custom and familiarity of which tongues do sometimes so far influence the expressions in these Epistles, that one may observe the force of the Hebrew conjugations, particularly that of Hiphil, given to Greek verbs, in a way unknown to the Grecians themselves. Nor is this all; the subject treated of in these Epistles is so wholly new, and the doctrines contained in them so perfectly remote from the notions that mankind were acquainted with, that most of the important terms in it have quite another signification from what they have in other discourses; so that putting all together, we may truly say, that the New Testament is a book written in a language peculiar to itself.

To these causes of obscurity, common to St Paul with most of the other penmen of the several books of the New Testament, we may add those that are peculiarly his, and owing to his style and temper. He was, as it is visible, a man of quick thought, warm temper, mighty well versed in the writings of the Old Testament, and full of the doctrine of the New. All this put together suggested matter to him in abundance on those subjects which came in his way; so that one may consider him, when he was writing, as beset with a crowd of thoughts, all striving for utterance. In this posture of mind it was almost impossible for him to keep that slow pace, and observe minutely that order and method of arranging all he said, from which results an easy and obvious perspicuity. To this plenty and vehemence of his may be imputed those many large parentheses, which a careful reader may observe in his Epistles. Upon this account also it is, that he often breaks off in the middle of an argument, to let in some.

new thought suggested by his own words; which having pursued and explained, as far as conduced to his present purpose, he reassumes again the thread of his discourse, and goes on with it, without taking any notice that he returns again to what he had been before saying; though sometimes it be so far off, that it may well have slipped out of his mind, and requires a very attentive reader to observe, and so bring the disjointed members together, as to make up the connexion, and see how the scattered parts of the discourse hang together in a coherent, well agreeing sense, that makes it all of a piece.

Besides the disturbance in perusing St Paul's Epistles from the plenty and vivacity of his thoughts, which may obscure his method and often hide his sense from an unwary or over hasty reader, the frequent changing of the personage he speaks in renders the sense very uncertain, and is apt to mislead one that has not some clue to guide him: sometimes by the pronoun I, he means himself; sometimes any Christian; sometimes a Jew, and sometimes any man, &c. If speaking of himself, in the first person singular, has so various meanings, his use of the first person plural is with a far greater latitude; sometimes designing himself alone; sometimes those with himself whom he makes partners to the Epistle; sometimes with himself comprehending the other Apostles, or preachers of the Gospel, or Christians; nay, sometimes he in that way speaks of the converted Jews, other times of the converted Gentiles, and sometimes of others, in a more or less extended sense; every one of which varies the meaning of the place, and makes it to be differently understood.

In the current also of his discourse, he sometimes drops in the objections of others, and his answers to them, without any change in the scheme of his language, that might give notice of any other speaking besides himself. This requires great attention to observe; and yet, if it be neglected or overlooked, will make the reader very much mistake and misunderstand his meaning, and render the sense very perplexed.

These are intrinsic difficulties arising from the text itself, whereof there might be a great many others named; as the uncertainty, sometimes, who are the persons he speaks to, or the opinions or practices which he has in his eye; sometimes in alluding to them, sometimes in his exhortations and reproofs. But those above mentioned being the chief, it may suffice to have opened our eyes a little upon them; which, well examined, may contribute towards our discovery of the rest.

To these we may subjoin two external causes, that have made no small increase of the native and original difficulties, that keep us from an easy and assured discovery of St Paul's sense, in many parts of his Epistles; and those are—

First, The dividing of them into chapters and verses, as we have done; whereby they are so chopped and minced, and as they are now printed, stand so broken and divided, that not only the common people take the verses usually for distinct aphorisms, but even men of more advanced knowledge, in reading them, lose very much of the strength and force of the coherence, and the light that depends upon it. Our minds

are so weak and narrow, that they have need of all the helps and assistances that can be procured, to lay before them undisturbedly the thread and coherence of any discourse; by which alone they are truly improved, and led into the genuine sense of the author. When the eye is constantly disturbed with loose sentences, that by their standing and separation appear as so many distinct fragments, the mind will have much ado to take in, and carry on in its memory, a uniform discourse of dependent reasonings; especially, having from the cradle been used to wrong impressions concerning them, and constantly accustomed to hear them quoted as distinct sentences, without any limitation or explication of their precise meaning from the place they stand in, and the relation they bear to what goes before, or follows. These divisions also have given occasion to the reading these Epistles by parcels, and in scraps, which has farther confirmed the evil arising from such partitions. And, I doubt not, but every one will confess it to be a very unlikely way to come to the understanding of any other letters, to read them piecemeal, a bit today, and another scrap tomorrow, and so on by broken intervals; especially if the pause and cessation should be made, as the chapters the Apostle's Epistles are divided into, to end sometimes in the middle of a discourse, and sometimes in the middle of a sentence. It cannot therefore but be wondered at, that that should be permitted to be done to holy writ, which would visibly disturb the sense, and hinder the understanding of any other book whatever. If Tully's Epistles were so printed, and so used, I ask whether they would not be much harder to be under-

stood, less easy and less pleasant to be read, by much, than now they are?

How plain soever this abuse is, and what prejudice soever it does to the understanding of the sacred Scripture, yet, if a bible was printed as it should be, and as the several parts of it were written, in continued discourses, where the argument is continued, I doubt not but the several parties would complain of it, as an innovation, and a dangerous change in the publishing of those holy books. And, indeed, those who are for maintaining their opinions, and the systems of parties, by sound of words, with a neglect of the true sense of Scripture, would have reason to make and foment the outcry; they would most of them be immediately disarmed of their great magazine of artilleries, wherewith they defend themselves, and fall upon others.

If the holy Scripture were but laid before the eyes of Christians in its due connexion and consistency, it would not then be so easy to snatch out a few words, as if they were separate from the rest, to serve a purpose, to which they do not at all belong, and with which they have nothing to do. But as the matter now stands, he that has a mind to it may, at a cheap rate, be a notable champion for the truth; that is, for the doctrines of the sect that chance or interest has cast him into. He need but be furnished with verses of sacred Scripture, containing words and expressions that are but flexible, (as all general, obscure, and doubtful ones are,) and his system, that has appropriated them to the orthodoxy of his church, makes them immediately strong and irrefragable arguments for his opinion. This is the benefit of loose sentences, and Scripture crumbled

into verses, which quickly turn into independent aphorisms. But if the quotation in the verse produced were considered as a part of a continued, coherent discourse, and so its sense were limited by the tenor of the context, most of these forward and warm disputants would be quite stripped of those, which they doubt not now to call spiritual weapons; and they would have often nothing to say, that would not show their weakness and manifestly fly in their faces. I crave leave to set down a saying of the learned and judicious Mr Selden. 'In interpreting the Scripture,' says he, 'many do as if a man should see one have ten pounds, which he reckoned by 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, meaning four was but four units, and five, five units, &c, and that he had in all but ten pounds; the other that sees him, takes not the figures together, as he does, but picks here and there; and thereupon reports, that he had five pounds in one bag, and six pounds in another bag, and nine pounds in another bag, &c, when, in truth, he has but ten pounds in all. So we pick out a text, here and there, to make it serve our turn; whereas, if we take it altogether, and consider what went before, and what followed after, we should find it meant no such thing.'

I have heard sober Christians very much admire, why ordinary, illiterate people, who were professors, that showed a concern for religion, seemed much more conversant in St Paul's Epistles, than in the plainer, and as it seemed to them, much more intelligible parts of the New Testament; they confessed, that though they read St Paul's Epistles with their best attention, yet they generally found them too hard to be mastered; and they labored in vain so far to reach the Apostle's meaning

all along in the train of what he said, as to read them with that satisfaction, that arises from a feeling that we understand and fully comprehend the force and reasoning of an author; and therefore they could not imagine what those saw in them, whose eyes they thought not much better than their own. But the case was plain; these sober, inquisitive readers had a mind to see nothing in St Paul's Epistles but just what he meant; whereas, those others, of a quicker and gayer sight, could see in them what they pleased. Nothing is more acceptable to fancy than pliant terms and expressions, that are not obstinate; in such it can find its account with delight, and with them be illuminated, orthodox, infallible, at pleasure, and in its own way. But where the sense of the author goes visibly in its own train, and the words, receiving a determined sense from their companions and adjacents, will not consent to give countenance and color to what is agreed to be right, and must be supported at any rate, there men of established orthodoxy do not so well find their satisfaction. And perhaps, if it were well examined, it would be no very extravagant paradox to say, that there are fewer that bring their opinions to the sacred Scripture, to be tried by that infallible rule, than bring the sacred Scripture to their opinions, to bend it to them, to make it, as they can, a cover and guard to them. And to this purpose, its being divided into verses, and brought as much as may be into loose and general aphorisms, makes it most useful and serviceable. And in this lies the other great cause of obscurity and perplexedness, which has been cast upon St Paul's Epistles from without.

St Paul's Epistles, as they stand translated in our

English bibles, are now, by long and constant use, become a part of the English language and common phraseology, especially in matters of religion; this every one uses familiarly, and thinks he understands; but it must be observed, that if he has a distinct meaning when he uses those words and phrases, and knows himself what he intends by them, it is always according to the sense of his own system, and the articles or interpretations of the society he is engaged in. So that all this knowledge and understanding, which he has in the use of these passages of sacred Scripture, reaches no farther than this, that he knows, (and that is very well,) what he himself says, but thereby knows nothing at all what St Paul said in them. The Apostle wrote not by that man's system, and so his meaning cannot be known by it. This being the ordinary way of understanding the Epistles, and every sect being perfectly orthodox in its own judgment, what a great and invincible darkness must this cast upon St Paul's meaning to all those of that way, in all those places where his thoughts and sense run counter to what any party has espoused for orthodox, as it must unavoidably to all but one of the different systems, in all those passages that any way relate to the points in controversy between them.

This is a mischief, which, however frequent, and almost natural, reaches so far, that it would just make all those who depend upon them wholly diffident of commentators; and let them see how little help was to be expected from them, in relying on them for the true sense of the sacred Scripture, did they not take care to help to cozen themselves, by choosing to use, and pin

their faith on such expositors as explain the sacred Scripture in favor of those opinions, that they beforehand have voted orthodox, and bring to the sacred Scripture not for trial, but confirmation.

Here it will be asked, where is that touchstone to be had, that will show us whether the meaning we ourselves put, or take as put by others upon St Paul's words, in his Epistles, be truly his meaning or not? I will not say, the way which I propose will make us infallible in our interpretations of the Apostle's text; but this I will own, that till I took this way, St Paul's Epistles to me, in the ordinary way of reading and studying them, were very obscure parts of Scripture, that left me almost everywhere at a loss; and I was at a great uncertainty in which of the contrary senses, that were to be found in his commentators, he was to be taken.

If any one be so far pleased with my endeavors, as to think it worth while to be informed what was the clue I guided myself by, through all the dark passages of these Epistles, I shall minutely tell him the steps by which I was brought into this way, that he may judge whether I proceeded rationally, upon right grounds or not.

After I had found, by long experience, that the reading of the text and comments in the ordinary way proved not so successful as I wished to the end proposed, I began to suspect, that reading a chapter as was usual, and thereupon sometimes consulting expositors upon some hard places of it, which at that time most affected me, as relating to points then under consideration in my own mind, or in debate among others, was not a right method to get into the true sense

of these Epistles. I saw plainly, after I began once to reflect on it, that if any one now should write me a letter, as long as St Paul's to the Romans, concerning such a matter as that is, in a style as foreign, and expressions as dubious as his seem to be; if I should divide it into fifteen or sixteen chapters, and read of them, one today, and another tomorrow, &c, it was ten to one I should never come to a full and clear comprehension of it. The way to understand the mind of him that wrote it, every one would agree, was to read the whole letter through, from one end to the other, all at once, to see what was the main subject and tendency of it; or if it had several views and purposes in it, not dependent one on another, nor in a subordination to one chief aim and end, to discover what those different matters were, and where the author concluded one and began another; and if there were any necessity for dividing the Epistle into parts, to make the boundaries of them.

In prosecution of this thought, I concluded it necessary, for the understanding of any one of St Paul's Epistles, to read it all through at one sitting, and to observe, as well as I could, the drift and design of his writing it. If the first reading gave me some light, the second gave me more; and so I persisted on, reading constantly the whole Epistle over at once, till I came to have a good general view of the Apostle's main purpose in writing the Epistle, the chief branches of his discourse wherein he prosecuted it, the arguments he used, and disposition of the whole.

This, I confess, is not to be obtained by one or two hasty readings; it must be repeated, again and again,

with a close attention to the tenor of the discourse, and a perfect neglect of the divisions into chapters and verses. On the contrary, the safest way is to suppose, that the Epistle has but one business, and one aim, till by a frequent perusal of it, you are forced to see there are distinct, independent matters in it, which will forwardly enough show themselves.

It requires so much more pains, judgment, and application, to find the coherence of obscure and abstruse writings, and makes them so much the more unfit to serve prejudice and pre-occupation when found, that it is not to be wondered that St Paul's Epistles have, with many, passed rather for disjointed, loose, pious discourses, full of warmth and zeal, and overflows of light, rather than for calm, strong, coherent reasonings, that carried a thread of argument and consistency all through them.

But this muttering of lazy, or ill disposed readers, hindered me not from persisting in the course I had begun; I continued to read the same Epistle over and over, and over again, till I came to discover, as appeared to me, what was the drift and aim of it, and by what steps and arguments St Paul prosecuted his purpose. I remembered that St Paul was miraculously called to the ministry of the Gospel, and declared to be a chosen vessel; that he had the whole doctrine of the Gospel from God by immediate revelation, and was appointed to be the Apostle of the Gentiles, for the propagation of it in the heathen world. This was enough to persuade me, that he was not a man of loose and shattered parts, incapable of arguing, and unfit to convince those he had to deal with.

That he knew how to prosecute his purpose with strength of argument, and close reasoning, without incoherent sallies, or the intermixing of things foreign to his business, was evident to me, from several speeches of his recorded in the Acts; and it was hard to think that a man, who could talk with so much consistency and clearness of conviction, should not be able to write without confusion, inextricable obscurity and perpetual rambling. The force, order and perspicuity of those discourses could not be denied to be very visible; how then came it, that the light was thought much wanting in his Epistles; and of this there appeared to me this plain reason; the particularities of the history, in which these speeches are inserted, show St Paul's end in speaking; which being seen, casts a light on the whole, and shows the pertinency of all that he says. But his Epistles not being so circumstantiated, there being no concurring history that plainly declares the disposition St Paul was in; what the actions, expectations or demands of those to whom he wrote, required him to speak to, we are nowhere told. All this, and a great deal more, necessary to guide us into the true meaning of the Epistles, is to be had only from the Epistles themselves, and to be gathered from thence with stubborn attention, and more than common application.

This being the only safe guide, (under the Spirit of God, that dictated these sacred writings,) that can be relied on, I hope I may be excused if I venture to say that the utmost ought to be done, to observe and trace out St Paul's reasonings: to follow the thread of his discourse in each of his Epistles; to show how it goes on, still directed with the same view, and pertinently

drawing the several incidents towards the same point. To understand him right, his inferences should be strictly observed; and it should be carefully examined from what they are drawn, and what they tend to. He is certainly a coherent, argumentative, pertinent writer; and care, I think, should be taken in the expounding of him, to show that he is so. But though I say he has weighty aims in his Epistles, which he steadily keeps in his eye, and drives at in all that he says; yet I do not say that he puts his discourses into an artificial method, or leads his reader into a distinction of his arguments, or gives them notice of new matter, by rhetorical, or studied transitions. He has no ornaments borrowed from the Greek eloquence; no notions of their philosophy mixed with his doctrine, to set it off. 'The enticing words of man's wisdom,' whereby he means all the studied rules of the Grecian schools, which made them such masters in the art of speaking, he, as he says himself, (1 Cor. ii. 4,) wholly neglected; the reason whereof he gives us in the next verse, and in other places. But though politeness of language, delicacy of style, fineness of expression, labored periods, artificial transitions, and a very methodical ranging of the parts, with such other embellishments as make a discourse enter the mind smoothly, and strike the fancy at first hearing, have little or no place in his style; yet coherence of discourse, and a direct tendency of all the parts of it to the argument in hand, are most eminently to be found in him. This I take to be his character, and doubt not but he will be found to be so upon diligent examination. And in this, if it be so, we have a clue, if we will take the pains to find it, that will conduct us with surety through those seemingly

dark places, and imagined intricacies, in which Christians have wandered so far one from another, as to find quite contrary senses.

Whether a superficial reading, accompanied with the common opinion of his invincible obscurity, has kept off some from seeking in him the coherence of a discourse, tending with close, strong reasoning to a point; or a seemingly more honorable opinion of one, that had been wrapped up into the third heaven, as if from a man so warmed and illuminated as he had been, nothing could be expected but flashes of light, and raptures of zeal, hindered others to look for a train of reasoning, proceeding on regular and cogent argumentation, from a man raised above the ordinary pitch of humanity to a higher and brighter way of illumination; or else, whether others were loath to beat their heads about the tenor and coherence in St Paul's discourses, which, if found out, possibly might set him at a manifest and irreconcileable difference with their systems; it is certain, that whatever has been the cause, this way of getting the true sense of St Paul's Epistles seems not to have been much made use of, or at least so thoroughly pursued as I am apt to think it deserves.

For, granting that he was full stored with knowledge of the things he treated of, for he had light from heaven, it was God himself furnished him, and he could not want; allowing also that he had ability to make use of the knowledge that had been given him, for the end for which it was given him, viz. the information, conviction, and conversion of others; and, accordingly, that he knew how to direct his discourse to the point in hand, we cannot widely mistake the parts of his

discourse employed about it, when we have anywhere found out the point he drives at; wherever we have got a view of his design, and the aim he proposed to himself in writing, we may be sure that such or such an interpretation does not give us his genuine sense, it being nothing at all to his present purpose. Nay, among various meanings given a text, it fails not to direct us to the best, and very often to assure us of the true; for it is no presumption, when one sees a man arguing for this or that proposition, if he be a sober man, master of reason or common sense, and takes any care of what he says, to pronounce, with confidence in several cases, that he could not talk thus or thus.

I do not yet so magnify this method of studying St Paul's Epistles, as well as other parts of sacred Scripture, as to think it will perfectly clear every hard place, and leave no doubt unresolved. I know, expressions now out of use, opinions of those times not heard of in our days, allusions to customs lost to us, and various circumstances and particularities of the parties, which we cannot come at, &c, must needs continue several passages in the dark now to us at this distance, which shone with full light to those they were directed to. But for all that, the studying of St Paul's Epistles in the way I have proposed, will, I humbly conceive, carry us a great length in the right understanding of them, and make us rejoice in the light we receive from these most useful parts of divine revelation, by furnishing us with visible grounds that we are not mistaken, while the consistency of the discourse, and the pertinency of it to the design he is upon, vouch it worthy of our great Apostle. At least, I hope, it may be my

excuse, for having endeavored to make St Paul an interpreter to me of his own Epistles.

To this may be added another help, which St Paul himself affords us, towards the attaining the true meaning contained in his Epistles. He that reads him with the attention I propose, will easily observe, that as he was full of the doctrine of the Gospel; so it lay all clear, and in order, open to his view. When he gave his thoughts utterance upon any point, the matter flowed like a torrent; but, it is plain, it was a matter he was perfectly master of; he fully possessed the entire revelation he had received from God; had thoroughly digested it; all the parts were formed together in his mind into one well contracted, harmonious body; so that he was no way at uncertainty, nor ever in the least at a loss concerning any branch of it. One may see his thoughts were all of a piece in all his Epistles; his notions were at all times uniform, and constantly the same, though his expressions very various; in them he seems to take great liberty. This, at least, is certain, that no one seems less tied up to a form of words. If then, having, by the method before proposed, got into the sense of the several Epistles, we will but compare what he says, in the places where he treats of the same subject, we can hardly be mistaken in his sense, nor doubt what it was, that he believed and taught concerning these points of the christian religion.

I know it is not unusual to find a multitude of texts heaped up for the maintaining of an espoused proposition, but in a sense often so remote from their true meaning, that one can hardly avoid thinking that those who so used them, either sought not, or valued not

the sense; and were satisfied with the sound, where they could but get that to favor them. But a verbal concordance leads not always to texts of the same meaning; trusting too much thereto will furnish us but with slight proofs in many cases; and any one may observe, how apt that is to jumble together passages of Scripture, not relating to the same matter, and thereby to disturb and unsettle the true meaning of holy Scripture. I have therefore said, that we should compare together places of Scripture treating upon the same point. Thus, indeed, one part of the sacred text could not fail to give light unto another. And since the providence of God has so ordered it, that St Paul has written a great number of Epistles, which, though upon different occasions, and to several purposes, yet are all confined within the business of his Apostleship, and so contain nothing but points of christian instruction, among which he seldom fails to drop in, and often to enlarge on the great and distinguishing doctrines of our holy religion; if, quitting our own infallibility in that analogy of faith which we have made to ourselves, or have implicitly adopted from some other, we would carefully lay these together, and diligently compare and study them, I am apt to think this would give us St Paul's system in a clear and indisputable sense. Every one must acknowledge this to be a better standard to interpret his meaning by, in any obscure and doubtful parts of his Epistles, if any such should still remain, than the system, confession, or articles of any church or society of Christians yet known; which, however pretended to be founded on Scripture, are visibly the contrivances of men, fallible both in their opinions and interpretations;

and, as is visible in most of them, made with partial views, and adapted to what the occasions of that time, and the present circumstances they were then in, were thought to require for the support or justification of themselves.

Their philosophy, also, has its part in misleading men from the true sense of the sacred Scripture. It is plain, that the teaching of men philosophy was no part of the design of divine revelation; but that the expressions of Scripture are commonly suited, in those matters, to the vulgar apprehensions and conceptions of the place and people where they were delivered. And, as to the doctrine therein directly taught by the Apostles, *that* tends wholly to the setting up the kingdom of Jesus Christ in this world, and the salvation of men's souls; and in this, it is plain, their expressions were conformed to the ideas and notions which they had received from revelation, or were consequent from it. We shall, therefore, in vain go about to interpret their words by the notions of our philosophy, and the doctrines of men delivered in our schools. This is to explain the Apostles' meaning by what they never thought of while they were writing; which is not the way to find their sense in what they delivered, but our own, and to take up from their writings, not what they left there for us, but what we bring along with us in ourselves. He that would understand St Paul right, must understand his terms in the sense he uses them; and not as they are appropriated, by each man's particular philosophy, to conceptions that never entered the mind of the Apostle. To represent to himself the notions St Paul then had in his mind is what we should

aim at in reading him, or any other author; and till we, from his words, paint his very ideas and thoughts in our minds, we do not understand him.

In a writer like St Paul, it is not so easy always to find precisely where one subject ends, and another begins. He is full of the matter he treats, and writes with warmth; which usually neglects method, and those partitions and pauses, which men educated in the schools of rhetoricians usually observe. Those arts of writing St Paul, as well out of design as temper, wholly laid by; the subject he had in hand and the grounds upon which it stood firm, and by which he enforced it, were what alone he minded; and, without solemnly winding up one argument, and intimating any way that he began another, let his thoughts, which were fully possessed of the matter, run in one continued train, wherein the parts of his discourse were woven one into another. So that it is seldom that the scheme of his discourse makes any gap; and therefore, without breaking in upon the connexion of his language, it is hardly possible to separate his discourse, and give a distinct view of his several arguments in distinct sections.

I am far from pretending infallibility, in the sense which I have anywhere given to his words; that would be to erect myself into an Apostle, a presumption of the highest nature in any one, that cannot confirm what he says by miracles. I have, for my own information, sought the true meaning, as far as my poor abilities would reach; and I have unbiassedly embraced what, upon a fair inquiry, appeared so to me. This I thought my duty and interest, in a matter of so great

concernment to me. If I must believe for myself, it is unavoidable that I must understand for myself; for if I blindly, and with an implicit faith, take the Pope's interpretation of the sacred Scripture, without examining whether it be Christ's meaning, it is the Pope I believe in, and not in Christ; it is his authority I rest upon; it is what he says I embrace; for what it is Christ says, I neither know, nor concern myself. It is the same thing when I set up any other man in Christ's place, and make him the authentic interpreter of sacred Scripture to myself. He may possibly understand the sacred Scripture as right as any man, but I shall do well to examine myself, whether that which I do not know, nay which (in the way I take) I can never know, can justify me in making myself his disciple, instead of Jesus Christ's, who of right is alone, and ought to be my only, Lord and Master; and it will be no less sacrilege in me to substitute to myself any other in his room, to be a prophet to me, than to be my king, or priest.

We are all men liable to errors, and infected with them; but have this sure way to preserve ourselves, every one, from danger by them, if, laying aside sloth, carelessness, prejudice, party, and a reverence of men, we betake ourselves in earnest to the study of the way to salvation, in those holy writings wherein God has revealed it from Heaven, and proposed it to the world; seeking our religion where we are sure it is in truth to be found, comparing spiritual things with spiritual things.

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ON

PIETY AT HOME.

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PIETY AT HOME.

St Paul, in his epistle to Timothy, charges him to exhort the younger members of families, 'to learn to show piety at home,' as their first duty. He seems to have used the word 'piety' in a restricted sense — nearly as it was employed by ancient classical writers — to denote the duties of children to their parents. We are at liberty however so to enlarge its signification, as to comprehend, under 'piety at home,' all the duties which grow out of our various domestic relations. How highly the Apostle valued this kind of piety, may be inferred from the strong terms in which he recommended it. 'If any man,' said he, 'provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an infidel;' — and with good reason; for the want of practical goodness in the most intimate connexions of life, is of all wants the most disastrous to human happiness.

I fear it is the tendency of this age, to underrate that kind of piety, which consists in doing right in a natural and quiet way. There is an inordinate appetite for strong sensations and startling effects; and they who are much engaged in what is technically called 'the religious action of the period,' are apt to regard 'patien

continuance in well doing' as no better than 'mere morality.' Thus discredit is thrown upon what is lovely, excellent and useful beyond all estimation, because religion is associated in the mind with the idea of doing, or experiencing some great thing — of being the agents of miraculous power abroad, or the subjects of miraculous power at home. When religion is understood to consist in a burning excitement, or an eagerness to exert influence at the greatest possible distance, the common-place pursuits of daily life do not seem to have dignity enough to be taken under its direction. Yet what can Christianity do for a man, better than to make him good in those very relations, which demand his chief care and duty? In what possible way can it minister to human virtue and happiness more largely, than by rendering us kind, gentle and faithful in our domestic connexions?

It is not often that any great sacrifice, or any heroic act of duty, can be required of us. Common virtues are more frequently wanted, and therefore more valuable, than extraordinary ones. If religion has any power in our hearts, it must be manifested chiefly in our doing little things well. When a man separates his religion from his morality, making the former one thing and the latter another and a different thing, there is great danger that neither will be very good. It is a mischievous practice to classify our actions, and say — these are moral, and these are religious duties. All duties are religious ones. The most common concerns of domestic and social life, and all the pursuits of industry, in which a question of right and wrong may be raised, are equally matters of religious obligation. The labors of the kitchen,

the nursery, the field, the counting-house and the workshop, are among the most important duties of religion; and unless we show our piety by acting well our part in our own immediate concerns — unless it make us amiable, diligent and faithful in our most intimate relations, we may be sure that there is something wrong in it. There may be but little glory, but there is a great deal of *merit*, and of *happiness* too, in 'showing piety at home' — in that narrow circle of duty, which God has made the principal sphere of our action. This may be illustrated.

I. By considering home as *the best nursery of the christian virtues.* Our domestic relations are far more intimate, and have far greater influence on our characters, than any other. Every family is a little community, bound together by the tenderest and holiest sympathies. All its members must share deeply in each other's joys and sorrows; their hopes, fears and interests are the same. No distress or mortification can fall upon one without affecting all. Each has an interest in the virtue and well-being of the rest; for here, as in the natural body, 'if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; and if one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it.' The pain which one member feels, thrills through the whole body; the vices of a son have often wrung to agony the heart of a parent; the infamy of a father has covered a whole family with overpowering shame and wretchedness.

This intimate union, or rather identity, of interests gives rise to many duties, out of which must grow habits of virtue. One of the best of these habits is

that of generous self-control — not seeking our own gratification so much as the comfort of the domestic circle — 'preferring one another in love.' As all the members of a family are dependent on each other for a large part of their comfort, each must be willing to sacrifice, not only his whims and caprices, but sometimes his reasonable wishes. How lovely and excellent is domestic affection, prompting unselfish and untiring exertions, and finding happiness while seeking only to bestow it! It is almost every moment in our power to comfort or to annoy those, with whom Providence has intimately associated our destiny. Disinterested and generous kindness at home, then, is a duty of the highest importance. An unworthy self-indulgence, or an inordinate care for our own petty conveniences, will occasion innumerable vexations. There are cases in which want of courtesy is want of virtue; harshness becomes a crime, when it wounds sensibility. Rude and ungentle manners, betraying a disregard to the feelings of others of the same household, will embitter the whole stream of family comfort ; indolent neglect may dry up its sources; and more than all, a violent, sullen or peevish temper may bring unspeakable misery into the circle of domestic affection.

There is indeed no school like home for the discipline of the temper and the heart. Whether your position requires you to command or obey — to work with the hands or the mind — to give or to receive, you may always find occasion for forbearance and self-denial. There will be discipline for the temper, exercise for the generous sensibilities, practice and nutriment for every christian virtue. This field of action may seem too

narrow for a heated and ambitious zeal; but it is ample enough to give developement and growth to our religious principles, if we use every occasion for cherishing a kind and disinterested spirit, a patient and tranquil temper, and a readiness to receive and impart happiness. These principles, so often called into action along with our best and tenderest affections, cannot fail to form habits of quiet, contented and beneficent virtue.

The Christian character is never more likely to grow strong and healthful than in this perpetual round of obscure and unostentatious duties. Its virtues then are genuine and substantial; for they have not been practised to be 'seen of men;'—no one can be always a hypocrite at home. They are not forced up to a rapid, sickly growth by the heat of exterior excitement, and therefore ready to wither and perish in a lower temperature of the feelings, whenever that excitement is withdrawn. They are sound, vigorous, deep-seated in the habits of life.

There may be a great deal of zeal to make a parade with abroad; but there can be no piety that is worth anything, unless we are willing to make it a blessing at home, by a patient and faithful fulfilment of noiseless and common-place duties. If we despise these as objects too humble for religion to notice, this life will afford us nothing better or even so good. The occasions for sublime virtue are rare; to most men they never occur at all. Christian principles will languish or die, if they are not habitually exercised in those little quiet duties which are always at hand. As human life is made up of a succession of moments, unimportant when considered singly, so character is formed by a long series

of acts, insignificant perhaps in themselves, but as units in the sum of moral existence and germs of deep-rooted habit, they will influence our whole future destiny.

I would not be understood to recommend that kind of exclusive benevolence, which, like selfish charity, begins and ends at home. As social beings we have other and remoter relations, each of which imposes its own duties. All the kind affections are diffusive in their character; God has given us a sympathetic nature, that we may employ its powers and affections in receiving and communicating happiness. Home must not be a sphere of repulsion. We may become thoroughly and inordinately selfish, by a too exclusive devotion to those, whom we are in the habit of regarding as a portion of ourselves. We are not allowed to retire into lonely and unsocial existence, feeling none of the hidden ties by which all generous hearts are linked together, and sending abroad no thrilling affections to seek answering sympathies in other bosoms. By no means. Both happiness and virtue are promoted by a large and free communion of mind with mind, and of heart with heart. As social beings, we have social wants and social duties. But as our duties are more numerous, our obligations more intense, and our good offices more wanted in proportion as our connexions are the closer, I would endeavor to make home the centre and nursery of all kind affections and generous virtues; and let them flow out from this exhaustless fountain of good influences, whenever remoter objects call for their exercise. Home then has claims upon us, to which all other claims are by their own nature secondary. How important it is, that we should all be true to these sacred

claims! If every individual would be faithful to these first duties which nature has prescribed, how few would be the demands for foreign aid and sympathy! How large a proportion of the whole of human misery is caused by those, who are, in some way or other, false to their domestic relations!

There is a great deal implied in 'making provision for our own.' Who are our own? All, certainly, to whom we are bound by ties of nature or affection. And what is this provision? Nothing less than happiness. It is not to provide for physical wants only; but for intellectual, moral, spiritual — all the wants of our imperishable nature, by the gratification of which happiness may be secured or misery averted. If it is our duty to provide bread for our families, it is not less our duty to provide every means of knowledge, virtue and comfort. This comfort we may promote by showing 'piety at home' in some of its most blessed fruits — diligence, good temper, kindness, a considerate and tender regard for every feeling which we may have power to wound or to soothe. How much of self-control, of disinterested affection and of deep religious sense of duty it requires, to be a good father, or mother, or husband, or wife, or son or brother! Almost every grace and virtue under heaven is put forth in habitually showing 'piety at home.' Every step taken in this course of natural and tranquil duty is carrying ourselves, and perhaps others, towards the perfection and glory of our nature.

Though it was my main design to speak generally of the duties we owe each other in the domestic relations, I cannot leave unnoticed a particular obligation of parents to their children. Their influence qualifies them in a

peculiar manner, to cultivate the minds and affections of the young immortals committed to their charge. Whether high or low, rich or poor, all are responsible for the religious instruction of their own. There is an education which no learning can give, and no wealth can buy, — which nothing but parental affection can impart. None but parents can inspire children with the unbounded confidence necessary to make their influence complete. This, observes an eloquent writer, 'is a part of domestic education, which cannot be devolved on strangers, and which, if not performed by parents, is not performed at all. A religion of the head may be acquired elsewhere; but for the religion of the heart, the child must drink it in with the accents that flow from the parental heart, as they fall from the parental lips.' Sunday schools and other schools must not be regarded as substitutes for parental instruction and influence; but merely as aids and extraneous advantages. And let no parent suppose himself incapable of fulfilling this sacred duty. 'God never places beings in a relation to each other,' says Dr Channing, 'without giving them strength to perform the duties arising from it. In all the arrangements we make for the improvement of children, we must be careful not to interfere with the natural connexions which God has established; but endeavor to aid and give effect to the influence of such connexions.' We must endeavor then to make home the nursery of early devotion.

This leads me to notice another branch of domestic duty, of such importance that it is often emphatically called 'family religion.' I mean habitual domestic worship. I fear this practice is not held in sufficient

estimation. If we would accomplish the sublimest ends of existence, as spiritual and immortal beings—if we would fulfil the highest domestic duties with joy, hope, and success — if we would keep our hearts open to the most blessed influences and consolations of religion, we shall seek communion with the Father of our spirits in the bosom of our families; and our filial and cheerful piety will heighten the joys of our lot, and take away the bitterness from the inevitable sorrows and disappointments of life. Let the sacred fire, once kindled on the domestic altar, never be quenched. Never let our children and domestics be left to suppose that God is for one day forgotten. Let them daily see that we place our confidence and hope in Him; that we seek protection under his sheltering providence; that we find our happiness in his service; that we feel his presence in our loneliness, and rejoice in our hours of devotion, when his spirit comes over our hearts in peace and in power. Let them see that we are faithful disciples of Jesus; and we may then teach their young affections to spread outward and upward from the circle of domestic love, and gather round the kind Saviour who took little children in his arms and blessed them. This is a duty of vast importance, not to ourselves only, but to our children, and even to remote generations, whom the breathings of a pious spirit may successively reach. Time will put no limits to its good influences; they will extend from age to age, and be fully known only in eternity.

II. Home is not only the nursery of life's best virtues, but, when these virtues are cherished, it is *the abode of its purest happiness.* The sum of human enjoy-

ment is not to be measured by transient raptures resulting from powerful excitement. Violent emotions are never lasting; and I do not know that they are often desirable. If a man cannot find happiness enough to satisfy him in the tranquil and rational pleasures of home, he is not likely to meet with it anywhere. He may have a kind of enjoyment; but he will look in vain for peace in a life of feverish dissipation. His inordinate excitements will be succeeded by languor without the rest of the weary, and remorse without the hope of the penitent. He has launched upon a fluctuating ocean, now agitated by an inspiring breeze, now subsiding into a sluggish calm — not the tranquillity of reposing nature, but the fearful stillness which betokens the coming tempest and shipwreck.

In the home of virtuous life there is pleasure, pure, peaceful and satisfying. All that is dear in friendship or tender in affection, all that can interest our sympathies or awaken our sensibilities, is associated with the word 'home.' The happiness of the domestic fireside is unenvied, often unnoticed, because it is not ostentatious and imposing. It is felt in the deep silence of the soul, but is too delicate and sacred to be proclaimed and admired. There are joys and sorrows of the heart, with which 'the stranger intermeddleth not.'

This happiness, so pure, so tranquil, so dear, is accessible to all, who do not turn away from its living fountains in pursuit of coarser pleasure. It belongs to every heart, which is rich in social virtues and affections. These may be taught to grow and cluster round our own loved home, and ripen into fruits to gladden and bless it. And they are not rare and exotic plants, reared with a toil

and cost beyond their worth; they are spontaneous and everspringing products of the soil, blasted only by harsh, selfish and vicious passions. Every generous spirit has felt that there is something worth living for in the domestic scenes described by the poet; when the cares of the day are over, and labor is succeeded by repose, and books, conversation and the heart's best affections dispose us to find delight in

> 'Fireside enjoyments, home born happiness,
> And all the comforts, which the lowly roof
> Of undisturbed retirement, and the hours
> Of long, uninterrupted evening know.'

That which constitutes our chief and permanent happiness must reside in the heart; for we have no other possession beyond the reach of accident, disease or age. The principal sources of human joy then are inward. By cultivating 'piety at home,' by learning to love its quiet duties and be contented with its tranquil pleasures, by cherishing all that is amiable and kind in our domestic nature, and all that is pure and lofty in spiritual affection, we can secure a happiness, purer, richer, more enduring than the promise of joyous youth — a happiness over which even time, and change, and death have no power — lasting as eternity, for it belongs to an imperishable spirit; it is in harmony with the sublime joys of Heaven. And this enjoyment is not selfish. It is more blessed in giving than in receiving; for it consists essentially in widening, deepening and multiplying the channels, through which happiness flows upon others.

The quiet, unenvied pleasures of home, multiplied as they are by sharing them with those whom we love, are to a great extent, independent of wealth and social distinc-

tions. They depend on affections and virtues nourished in the bosom of domestic retirement; they are within the reach of every warm and feeling heart. The poor man's cottage and the laborer's hardships need not go unblessed. Moral discipline may render even care and toil a change, rather than an interruption of their humble happiness. Severe affliction cannot wholly destroy it; for it dwells in the depths of our moral nature.

Yet affliction, though it cannot wholly destroy the happiness which flows from domestic virtue, may for a time overshadow it. Sorrows and disappointments will invade the happiest abode; in every cup of earthly enjoyment the waters of bitterness are mingled. And it is well that it should be so. Our discipline requires it; we are not fit to bear a continual sunlight of joy. Something must be suffered, to remind us of the value of our blessings. Something is necessary to cherish our generous sympathies, to exercise our passive virtues, to teach us our dependence upon God, to raise our aspirations to a higher and brighter home. Grief then must come into every circle of affection, but the wounded spirit finds a sweet consolation in domestic sympathy; and how dear is this sympathy both in our joys and in our sorrows! In trouble it gives to religion peculiar efficacy, when the offering of kindred hearts goes up from the family altar. How powerful are the influences of domestic worship, when the flame of devotion, perhaps first lighted up in the retirement of one lonely spirit, spreads from heart to heart till all are animated by one soul, and breathe out one deep felt prayer to the Great Father, 'who placeth the solitary in families.'

These home feelings are strongest in our happiest hours; they enhance the power of faith and the joy of devotion. They belong to our nature in its purest state, and readily harmonize with our religious sensibilities, carrying those affections, which have embraced and blessed our fellow creatures on earth, upward to the Fountain of love, and giving us an ever-growing relish for all that is excellent in faith and virtue and immortal hope. 'No eloquence,' says President Dwight, 'no time, no labor is necessary to awaken these sympathetic emotions in those, who are accustomed to rejoice and mourn, to hope and fear, to weep and smile together. They are caught at once from eye to eye, and from heart to heart; and spread, instantaneously, with an electric influence through all the endeared and happy circle. Who that wears the name of man, can be indifferent here? Must not the venerable character of the parents, the peculiar tenderness of the conjugal union, the affectionate intimacy of the filial and fraternal relations; must not the nearness of relations long existing, the interchange of kindness long continued, and the oneness of interests long cemented, all warm the heart, heighten the importance of every petition, and increase the fervor of every devotional effort? The world, perhaps, does not furnish a single prospect so beautiful, so lovely to the eye of virtuous contemplation, as a family thus assembled for their affectionate devotions. No priest, no minister is so venerable as a father; no congregation so dear and tenderly beloved, as a wife and children; and no oblations are offered with the same union, interest and delight as those of a pious and affectionate household.'

I must now dismiss the images of peace, joy and holiness, which gather round the subject of 'piety at home.' I have considered a well regulated household as the nursery of man's best virtues, and the dwelling-place of his purest happiness. I have done it with the fullest conviction of the misery caused by the want of domestic kindness, or the desertion of domestic duty. How grievous is the mistake of those, who despise the quiet and constant pleasures of home; and perversely look for more thrilling sensations in some unworthy enjoyment abroad! And how great is the guilt of those, who neglect to make their home an agreeable residence, whose ill humor or ill management drives part of a family abroad — perhaps to the haunts of sin, shame and ruin — in search of that comfort, which dwells only in the asylum of domestic affection.

Let me then persuade all to cherish that piety, which will make their own homes the hallowed dwelling-place of virtue, love and joy. Let the husband, the wife, the father, or the mother solemnly reflect on the wo and ruin, which domestic misconduct has always brought into the bosom of a family. Let the vicious and wayward child look at the unutterable anguish he has caused, and say if he can coolly resolve to continue false to those sacred relations, which nature established and which God commands him to revere. Let every Christian, in short, consider how large a part of his duty centres in his own home, and consists in the practice of private virtues and the exercise of amiable affections — how much of the true dignity and happiness of our nature depends upon a faithful and untiring devotion to the domestic charities.

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THE ANTIQUITY AND REVIVAL OF UNITARIAN CHRISTIANITY.

BY WILLIAM WARE.

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The sketch which follows will, I hope, be found free from essential inaccuracies. My authorities have been such only as I happened to have among my own books, and to these I here generally refer, having made any use of them that was convenient; — Mosheims's Ecclesiastical History — Gibbon's Roman History — Hume — Priestley's Early Opinions — General Repository and Review — Toulmin's Life of Socinus — Toulmin's Life of Biddle — Lindsey's History of Unitarianism since the Reformation — Rees's Racovian Catechism. W. W.

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ANTIQUITY AND REVIVAL

OF

UNITARIAN CHRISTIANITY.

We hear it often urged, among other objections to the doctrines of Unitarian Christianity, that they are new, that they are now for the first time presented to the world; whereas if they are true and constitute a genuine part of the gospel, it is incredible that they should not early have been discovered to be there, and traces should not be found of them all along through the history of the church. We believe this to be the demonstrable fact; we believe them to have been the earliest of all the forms of Christianity which obtained a general currency and belief, and that from the time they were in a manner extinguished by the violent measures employed against them, they at intervals reappeared and were avowed by free and courageous minds, till at the present day they have spread themselves everywhere, where religious liberty is enjoyed.

Let us then look at the origin and trace the progress of Unitarian Christianity.

It cannot be supposed that we believe its origin to be less ancient than that of Christianity itself. It cannot

be supposed that we should hold up any views of gospel truth to the world, which we did not conscientiously believe to have been preached by the founder of this religion and his immediate disciples. Unitarian Christianity we are confident is the Christianity of the Gospels, of the Acts, of the Epistles. It is the religion of the New Testament — the only religion of the New Testament. It is because we think thus, that we yield it our faith, and fervently pray that the time may soon come, as we believe it eventually will, when it shall be the faith of the world.

We believe the foundations of Unitarian Christianity were laid by Jesus Christ himself, when in those emphatic words, 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is One Lord,' he re-announced the distinguishing tenet of the old religion as the corner stone of the new; when he said, 'there is none other good but one, that is God;' when he said, 'my Father is greater than I;' when he said, 'this is eternal life, to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent;' when he said, 'of that day and hour knoweth no man, neither the Son, but the Father only;' when he said, 'I can of mine own self do nothing,' 'my doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.' In these and a multitude of similar expressions and declarations do we trace the origin of Unitarian Christianity, to the highest antiquity, to the words of our Lord himself. We think the Gospels, when judged by the same rules, and read in the same impartial spirit as other books, are plain books on this subject, and would never suggest to a mind which approached them wholly unprejudiced, such a doctrine as that of the Trinity or the deity of Jesus Christ.

Their general tenor and prevailing language, as well as express declarations, seem to give assurance that the tenets which we now draw from them, and no others, were the tenets of their writers.

Unless Unitarianism is the religion of the New Testament, unless it was the faith of its historians, it does not seem possible to explain the otherwise most extraordinary fact, that one of them, viz. Luke, should have written a whole Gospel, in which it was his object to give a history of Jesus Christ, and an account of his religion, and yet make no mention of such a doctrine as that of the Trinity — a doctrine, which, if true, was the most important doctrine of Christianity. And let it be observed, that the advocates of the doctrine themselves do not profess to draw one single text from this Gospel, which so much as *implies* that Luke had ever heard of or intended to teach it. All this appears to us wholly inexplicable, if the doctrine be true. Had it been true — had Luke known of it, he must have regarded it as the most extraordinary doctrine of revelation; and it would have filled a conspicuous place in his history. It would at least have been named, have been explained, and we may even suppose, defended; for it was such an infringement of the Jewish tenet of God's essential unity, as would need to be most fully and incontrovertibly established to be a new revelation from God, before it would be possible it should be believed. Yet we discover nothing of all this. But Luke has written his Gospel evidently in utter ignorance of it; and here we find the origin of Unitarian Christianity. The same remarks, with slight modifications, are true also of the other Evangelists.

We pass then to the history of the Acts. In this book also, as well as in all the language of Jesus Christ himself, do we find the faith of Unitarian Christianity, and that alone. This book is the only account we have of the propagation of Christ's religion, from the time of the ascension of its founder down to the imprisonment of Paul at Rome — a period of about thirty years. Now if the doctrine of the Trinity had lain at the foundation of Christianity, as it must if it had been promulgated by Christ, can we suppose that in such a history this doctrine would never be so much as named, or its existence implied? Not only that, but a faith its very opposite repeatedly recorded as the faith which the Apostles preached? — Yet this is all so. Read over from beginning to end the book of Acts, keeping in mind the supposed fact, that the doctrine of the Trinity is a fundamental truth of the gospel, and find if you can any evidence to support it. Believe that Luke, the author of this book, knew of this doctrine, regarded it, as in that case he must have done, as the grand essential of the religion, and then explain if you can the amazing fact that he passes it over in silence; that the Apostles, when in their preaching they were giving a representation of the great truths of the religion, pass it over in silence; that the Jews, in raising objections to the religion, pass over this most obnoxious doctrine, as it would have been to them, in silence. As you read and ponder this book, containing the only history we have of the state of Christianity for those thirty years, you will say to yourself, — the only explanation, the only possible one of all this is, that this doctrine is not a doctrine of Christianity; and you will feel that we are justified in

referring to this book, as a history of the origin and early progress of Unitarian Christianity.

We believe then, on evidence afforded by the sacred books themselves, as we think, that these books contain the first accounts of the rise and early progress of Unitarian Christianity. Down to the close of the apostolic age, we see no proof from the opposite side to shake our firm, unhesitating belief, that to that time the whole body of the Christian Church was Unitarian.

The book of Acts closes with Paul's imprisonment at Rome, in the year 64. There now follows a period, of which no distinct and minute history has come down to us. But Eusebius (who wrote in the fourth century) informs us that the history of the Acts was taken up and continued by a Jewish writer of the name of Hegesippus, whose works were early lost. His history came down to the middle of the second century. A few extracts have been found in the early Fathers, and one of them, as preserved by Eusebius, contains a list of those sects, which in the time of Hegesippus were deemed heretical. Among these (he enumerates eleven) is not one which held Unitarian sentiments. In all those which he names we notice a departure from these sentiments. The irresistible inference from this is, that in the middle of the second century Unitarian sentiments were not deemed heretical. We know from other sources, that at that time, and long before, there was a considerable body of Jewish Christians called Ebionites who held the doctrine of the simple humanity of Jesus Christ; yet they are not mentioned by Hegesippus. He regarded their opinions therefore as Orthodox.

The next historical fact which is to be noticed is the very remarkable one, that, on the admission of the early Fathers, no doctrine approaching the deification of Jesus was broached, or known in the Church till the year 68 — the year in which John wrote his Gospel. They are agreed in the opinion that till then none of the apostles or followers of our Lord had unfolded such a mystery. This fact is so important, however, that we give a few quotations from the Fathers of the third and fourth centuries, to which we ask the very careful attention of the reader.

Origen in the third century says, 'John alone introduced the knowledge of the eternity of Christ to the minds of the Fathers.'

Eusebius in the fourth century says, 'John began the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, that being reserved for him as the most worthy.'

Chrysostom in the same century says, 'The three first Evangelists treated of the fleshly dispensation and silently of his miracles indicated his dignity. *** John, therefore, the son of thunder, being the last advanced to the doctrine of the Logos.' — Again; he introduces John as holding a soliloquy with himself and saying, 'Why do I delay? Why have I longer patience? Why do I not bring forth the mystery hid from ages? *** Why do I not write what Matthew, Mark and Luke, through a wise and praiseworthy fear, passed in silence according to the orders that were given them? *** But I, leaving all things which have come to pass from time, and in time, will speak of that which was without time and uncreated, about the Logos of God.'

Jerome says, 'John the Apostle wrote his Gospel last of all, at the entreaty of the bishops of Asia, against Cerinthus and other heretics, and especially the doctrine of the Ebionites then gaining ground, who said that Christ had no being before he was born of Mary; whence he was compelled to declare his divine origin.'

Theophylact writes, 'Therefore John began with the divinity of Christ, for whereas others had made no mention of his existence before the ages, he taught that doctrine, lest the Logos of God should have been thought to be a mere man, without any divinity.' And again — 'John wrote lest men should never think highly concerning Christ, and imagine he had no being before he was born of Mary.'

These are remarkable admissions. They prove that these eminent Fathers of the third and fourth centuries believed that the deity of Christ was first taught not till the year 68, by the Apostle John. If it was the opinion that all the Apostles had themselves been enlightened in the knowledge of this mystery on the day of Pentecost, yet it was at the same time their belief that it had never been preached or divulged in any way by them, but that John was the first who published it. The others prepared the way. It was therefore by consequence their belief that the whole Church during that period was strictly Unitarian; that all who had been converted to Christianity by Christ and the Apostles during a ministry of nearly forty years were converts to Unitarian Christianity. They confess that the deity of Christ was then unknown.

By reference to language used by the same Fathers, the further fact may, in the next place, be established,

that in *their* time, that is, in the third and fourth centuries, the body of the people were still Unitarians.

Origen, in the third century, says — 'There *are* those, who partake of the Logos which was from the beginning; but there are others, who know nothing but Jesus and him crucified, and think they have everything of the Logos when they acknowledge Christ according to the flesh; such is the multitude of those who believe.' Is not this remarkable? He affirms that the multitude of those who were Christians in his time received Jesus only according to the flesh, i. e. believed only in the fact that he was an inspired prophet, and of course denied his deity. How did they come by their faith? How but by the teaching of Christ and the Apostles? They did not learn it from the Fathers of this century (the third,) who had become Orthodox by the study of Plato; they could not have invented it themselves, for the common people are not given to speculation on philosophical and theological subjects; from whom then did they receive it, but by tradition from the Apostles? And we may say, that if the *great body* of Christians were Unitarian in the middle of the third century, it is a sufficient proof, that it was the original faith, — that *all* were so in the first century. For it does not admit of supposition, that having been taught by Christ and his Apostles in the doctrine of his deity they should so soon have forsaken it. It is an axiom laid down, which cannot be disputed, which all history goes to confirm, that great bodies of the common people do not suddenly change their opinions. Especially was it unlikely that the body of the common people should so soon take up with an opinion, which degraded Christ from being God

to the nature and condition of merely an inspired prophet. To have added to his dignity would be natural and likely, but not to take from it.

Once more, to the same point, Tertullian, later in the same century or at the beginning of the third, says, 'The simple, the unlearned, the ignorant, who are always the greater part of the body of Christians, since the rule of faith transfers the worship of many gods to the one true God, not understanding that the unity of God is to be maintained but with the œconomy, dread this œconomy, imagining that this number and disposition of a Trinity is a division of the Unity. They therefore will have it, that we are worshippers of two, even three gods; but that they are worshippers of only one God. We, say they, hold the monarchy. Even the Latins have learned to bawl out for the monarchy [one God] and the Greeks themselves will not understand the œconomy.' Here is a confession of the same most important fact; the simple, ignorant, unlearned, who constitute the body of the people and are the true representatives of ancient opinions, were holders of the Unity and rejected with great dread the Trinity; and this so late as the year 200. Can we need better evidence, to show that down to this time, the mass of the people, the common people, were Unitarians? The learned had indeed changed their faith, by studying that which was the fashionable learning of the day, the philosophy of Plato; and they express their vexation in no gentle terms at the obstinacy of the people, in that they would not more readily receive their new doctrines relating to Christ's deity.

It is here to be noticed as a well established fact,

in regard to the opinions of all the Orthodox Fathers of the Church, before the Council of Nice (in the year, 325,) that in their notions of the Trinity they differed very widely from those who now hold it, or who lived after that Council. They universally ascribed a supremacy to the Father; their Trinity was not one of equal persons; there was still so much of the early doctrine concerning the nature of Christ prevailing in the community, and modifying their own sentiments, that they all maintained that the Son and the Spirit were both, in some sense, inferior to the Father. Orthodoxy at that time was what would now pass for little more than a form of Unitarianism. This fact speaks volumes as to the gradual formation of this doctrine; and therefore that it was not an original revelation.

Before the Council of Nice, and chiefly in the early part of the fourth century, and the latter part of the third, there flourished several distinguished men, who embraced what would be termed heretical opinions on this great question. Of these were Theodotus of Byzantium — Praxeas the Montanist — Artemon — Noetus — Sabellius — and Paul, bishop of Samosata. The last of these had numerous followers, called after him Paulians or Paulianists. His opinions, as described by Mosheim, were, 'that the Son and Holy Ghost exist in God in the same manner as the faculties of reason and activity do in man; that Christ was born a mere man, but that the reason and wisdom of the Father descended into him, and by him wrought miracles upon earth, and instructed the nations; and finally that on account of this union of the divine word (or reason) with the man Jesus, Christ might, though improperly, be called God.'

We are now arrived at the beginning of the fourth century, where we come in contact with the rise of *Arianism.*

This is another important fact in ecclesiastical history, to show the antiquity of Unitarian opinions. The Arianism of the fourth century is a long and important chapter in the history of the christian Church, and the evidence therefore, which it bears to the antiquity and former diffusion of Unitarianism, is proportionally ample and luminous. It is in general but little understood or remembered, how very near Unitarianism was being perpetuated as the orthodoxy of Christianity, in the fourth century — how long and tremblingly the balance hung, before it at last, more from accidental causes than any others, (humanly judging,) settled slowly on the side of Athanasianism. But let us look for a moment at the facts. Arius was a presbyter of Alexandria in lower Egypt. Having convinced himself of the prevailing errors among the learned, in relation to the Trinity and the person of Jesus Christ, he did not scruple publicly to avow his difference of opinion, and to offer to the world the arguments by which it was sustained. The consequence was, that his opinions among the inquiring and learned were very widely and cordially embraced — so much so as to alarm the bishop of Alexandria for the safety of the orthodox faith ; and as the best means to crush the evil, the heretical presbyter was deposed from his office and banished the country. His opinions still grew, however, and caused so extensive a division in the Church, and so much bitter controversy, that the Emperor Constantine summoned a council of bishops at Nice for the determining of this question. The history of the doings

of this council is very imperfect. 'The ancient writers,' says Mosheim, 'are neither agreed concerning the time nor place in which it was assembled, the number of those who set in council, nor the bishop who presided.'

By whatever majority the doctrine of the Trinity was carried, that majority itself was a divided and distracted body, being composed (in what proportions we do not learn,) of Tritheists and Sabellians; and Sabellians are Unitarians under another name. 'The majority,' says Gibbon, 'was divided into two parties, distinguished by a contrary tendency to the sentiments of the Tritheists and of the Saballians. But the interests of a common cause inclined them to join their numbers and to conceal their differences.' The most violent measures, it is well known, were resorted to by Constantine, to intimidate the Arian members of the council. When we are told, that 'those who should resist the divine judgment of the synod' were threatened with immediate exile, 'the writings of Arius condemned to the flames, and capital punishment denounced against those in whose possession they should be found,' we are not permitted to regard the decision of this council, as giving any fair representation whatever of the state of opinion at the time it was held. Had the Emperor chanced to have been then an Arian, as he was a few years later, and had used the same means to carry his end, who can say that a Unitarian creed, instead of the Nicene and Athanasian, would not now grace the pages of the prayer books.

The doctrine of the Trinity was however voted to be true by this assembly, and became, as we may say, the established religion of the empire. But no sooner was

this done, than new zeal seemed to actuate the Arians. The party still flourished and increased, and even the Emperor Constantine was at last converted by their arguments or their persuasions. Arius was recalled from banishment, loaded with favors, and, at the command of the Emperor, readmitted to the communion of the Church by the bishop of Constantinople. Unitarianism was now the religion of the state. It remained so under Constantius, Emperor of the East, and when the West also fell into his power, Arianism revived and triumphed there also. And so it continued, alternately rising and falling, during a period of nearly half a century, till it expired beneath the rigorous methods adopted for its extinction by the Emperor Gratian and Theodosius the Great ; — methods, which always have proved equal to the temporary suppression, at least, of any opinion, against which they are brought to bear, whether true or false.

From this brief sketch of the history and fate of the opinions of Arius, who held one form of Unitarianism, a form still existing in the Church, we see the antiquity of these views, how great was their early popularity, how wide their diffusion, and how probable it was at one time — at more than one — that they might become the orthodoxy of the Church. We may say, for example, that had the life of Constantine been prolonged a few years, had he not suddenly died, just at the time Arius was risen again into credit, had not Arius himself — who is supposed to have been poisoned by his enemies — also died about the same time, it is highly probable his opinions would, through the favor they enjoyed at the court of the great Constantine, have attained a spread

and a power, that would have insured them the same perpetuity, which a change of circumstances and new events conferred upon the rival faith. But let it not be forgotten, that during a period of nearly fifty years, under the successive reigns of Constantine, Constantius and Valens, Unitarianism was the established religion of the Roman Empire.*

I pass over the long and dreary interval of the dark ages, during which, so entirely was opinion at the mercy of power, and so savage and summary were the methods of dealing with it and silencing it, that whatever opposed the reigning and established faith of the Catholic Church quietly sunk into oblivion. A general darkness and corruption prevailed and shed a deep gloom over the christian world. The universal ignorance in which mankind were buried prevented inquiry or discussion; fear restrained those who might think freely from uttering their opinion; superstition stood ready with

* The following table will show the condition of Arianism during this period. Arius was restored to favor by Constantine, in the year 330, which may be taken as the date of the first triumph of Arianism. Constantine died in 336, and was succeeded by,

Constantine II.	Nicene.
Constantius	Arian, reigned 25 years.
Constans	Nicene.
Julian	Pagan.
Jovian	Nicene.
Valentine	Nicene.
Valens	Arian, reigned 16 years.
Gratian	Nicene.
Valentinian	Nicene.
Theodosius	Nicene.

Valens died in the year 378. i. e. Arianism had the ascendency 41 years out of 48.

her chains, her rack and her fagots, to silence forever the tongue that should dare to assail the integrity of the Catholic faith. No wonder that religion lay during that dismal night helpless and afraid. Even learning perished; for it was a crime for the philosopher to think out his problems, if they seemed in any way to clash with the faith or philosophy of the Church. We need not inquire what the fate of him would have been, who, with whatever sincerity he had arrived at his conclusions, should have dared to question the truth of the doctrine of the Trinity. That we hear little of Arianism during these centuries cannot surprise us.

We come now, then, to the era of the Reformation. Unitarianism revived with learning and religious freedom. It revived in the labors, the inquiries, and the religious zeal of two learned Italians, Lelius and Faustus Socinus. The first of these, in company with others of the same stamp, fired with the spirit of religious freedom which the efforts of Luther and his coadjutors had kindled throughout Europe, engaged in the discussion of theological questions with the priests and philosophers of the state of Venice. They did not, with Luther and others, stop at the more glaring abuses and corruptions of Popery. Enlightened probably by the writings of the famous Servetus, they felt that the doctrine of the Trinity was as little a part of true Scripture as that of transubstantiation; that the reasoning which was fatal to the latter was fatal also to the former. They did not scruple therefore to attack it in open public debate. But this was a freedom that could not be tolerated. It was producing effects upon the popular mind, that

struck fear into the rulers of the Church. Immediate resort was had to those certain remedies of this kind of evil, the use of which the age justified, and the persons who had engaged in these discussions were, some banished, some cast into the dungeons of the inquisition, and two of them, Julius Trevisanus and Francis de Ruego put to death in Venice. — Lelius Socinus, among others, fled, and settled first in Switzerland. He afterwards visited Poland, where the sentiments which he avowed were already extensively received, and enjoyed a considerable share of public favor. The establishment of Unitarianism in this empire had taken place in consequence of the emigration thither, in 1546, of a Dutchman of the name of Spiritus, and otherwise called Adam Pastor. He made many converts by preaching and conversation, and the opinions rapidly spread. The success of these proscribed sentiments in this kingdom is to be ascribed to the circumstance, that it was the only one where religious liberty was enjoyed. In other kingdoms, even those in which the cause of the Reformation prevailed, several edicts existed against all such as should go farther than the leading reformers went; especially against such as should deny the doctrine of the Trinity. In Poland it was better; and hence this country became the resort of those, whose heresy had banished them from the other parts of Europe. Hither, as has been said, came, in 1551, Lelius Socinus, and hither some years after, in 1579, came Faustus, his nephew.

A large community of Unitarians now grew up, with numerous churches and a flourishing institution at Racow for general and religious education. This Academy, or University, boasted the first scholars of Europe

among its professors, and at one time counted more than a thousand students drawn from all parts of the civilized world. 'The Unitarian system,' says a biographer of Faustus Socinus, 'received from his labors and pen a method, consistency and connexion it wanted before. Many persons of rank and opulence became converts to it. It was for some years favored with the protection of the great, and assisted by the liberality of the rich.' Under the broad wing of religious liberty all was happy and prosperous; and Poland might justly feel proud, that it was within her borders that Christianity, after so general a corruption, first returned to nearly its original purity. 'This country,' says Dr Toulmin, 'had the honor of carrying the reformation to a degree of perfection it did not arrive at in any other kingdom for almost two centuries; as here were formed and erected the first churches, where public worship was conducted on a plan agreeable to the simplicity of the gospel, and their prayers directed to God the Father only through Jesus Christ as the Mediator.'

But this season of prosperity and peace soon had its termination. The great success of Unitarianism was viewed with jealousy on all sides, and its ruin was decreed. Popery and bigotry were waiting for the hour of revenge and triumph, and it came. Catholics and Calvinistic Protestants here were of one heart and mind; they united to crush a common enemy. The first act of open hostility toward the Unitarians was directed against an opulent merchant of the name of Tyscovicius. He was cited to answer to some false and frivolous charges, and on being required to swear in the name of the triune God, refused. Proceedings were instituted,

which ended in his condemnation. He was sentenced to have his tongue pierced for his alleged blasphemy; to have his hands and feet cut off; then to be beheaded, and last of all to have his body burned at the stake. This sentence was, at the instigation of the Jesuits, executed in all its horrible circumstances at Warsaw. As the war was now begun, and the Jesuits, with the Calvinists and Lutherans, felt their power over the common people, an occasion was not long wanting, which in their minds warranted a renewal of similar measures. On some act of disrespect committed by the students of the Academy at Racow towards the Catholic religion, the populace were excited by the arts of the priests against the whole body of the Unitarians. The country was roused, and by petition, threat, and popular tumult the government was compelled to act. Decrees were passed and issued (after some opposition) at Warsaw, depriving the Unitarians of their rights as citizens, closing their churches, their schools and institutions, and printing offices. The pastors and professors were banished. Subsequent edicts, still more severe, forbade the profession of Unitarianism on pain of death, and every Unitarian was required to quit the kingdom within three years. They fled in every direction; but took refuge chiefly in Holland and Transylvania. In the latter kingdom they enjoyed a quiet and safe asylum. Its prince was of their faith, and the greater portion of its inhabitants. Here this form of Christianity has continued to flourish to the present day; more than 40,000 of the citizens of that state openly professing it. Thus, after an existence of nearly a hundred years, great part of the time in a condition of much prosperity, en-

joying the protection of the laws of a free country, Unitarianism was at last suppressed in Poland, by the same means which have so often proved, for a season at least, fatal to truth. Religious persecution, on the part of both Catholics and Protestants, accomplished its ruin.

While these things were transacting in Poland, about the middle of the 16th century, Michael Servetus, who since his twentieth year had been an unwearied advocate of the Unitarian faith, was engaged successively in Germany, France and Switzerland, in writing and disputing against the same doctrine, for assailing which Socinus had suffered banishment from his native land. The fate of Servetus was however far more cruel. It was his misfortune to have for his opponent the celebrated Calvin. Servetus persisting in spite of his remonstrances to maintain and defend his notions touching the Trinity, Calvin, having arrested him on his way through Geneva to Naples, procured his accusation, before the authorities of the city, of heretical and damnable errors. He was found guilty ; and not choosing to recant, was thrown into prison. After a protracted trial a decree of death was obtained against him — death in its most cruel form — burning alive. And thus this learned and pious man, this accomplished scholar and friend of religion, for the high crime of having and expressing his own sincere opinions, was tortured to death at the stake.* The character of Calvin has never recovered from the deep and ineffaceable stain of malignant cruelty, which this act has forever fastened upon it. Persecution for opinion, and to any extent, was allowed, it is true, by the spirit of the age. It was on all sides thought right and reli-

*1553

gious to torture or destroy the man, who did not or would not believe as those in power believed. But in this instance, there was a thirst of blood manifested in the movements of the Genevan reformer, that compel the belief that he was one who gave a spirit to the age rather than received one from it. How little was Christianity understood at the era of the Reformation! Why are men willing to suppose, that the reformers saw *all truth*, when they were so ignorant of the *spirit* of the Gospel?

About the same time, in England, Unitarianism was professed, notwithstanding the almost certain penalties of torture and death which awaited it, by a lady of family and character of the name of Joan Bocher, or as she is sometimes called, Joan of Kent. She too paid for her sincerity and ardor the forfeit of her life. The warrant for her death was signed, with tears in his eyes — driven to it by the furious zeal of the bishops — by the young and gentle Edward VI.; and she was delivered over to the flames. At the same time, 1549, a Dutchman of the name of Van Paris, daring to believe his own belief concerning the person of Christ, and avowing his heretical opinion, was also burned alive.—In the reign of Elizabeth the same infernal principles held their sway, and she made herself infamous, as for other atrocious acts, so for burning alive several Unitarian Anabaptists, Hollanders, who had taken refuge in England from persecution at home. — James, also, signalized his reign by deeds alike savage. Two Englishmen, Leggat and Wightman, and a Spaniard were in his reign convicted of the high crime of denying the Trinity and holding Unitarian sentiments, and under a warrant signed by the King's hand, in doing which, it is said, he

manifested great pleasure, they too were burned alive at the stake.

These, it is believed, were the last who have suffered death for their Unitarian opinions. The character of the times softened by degrees, and burning alive for this heresy was no longer tolerated. But the laws still inflicted death. An act passed by the Long Parliament, in 1648, places the denial of the doctrine of the Trinity upon the ground of felony, punishable with death. The courts and juries, however, were content with the lighter punishments of fine, banishment, and imprisonment. These were still the weapons, by which men were intimidated in the work of religious inquiry, and withheld from avowing publicly their belief. Some few, however, still had courage to brave the censures and power of the world. Among these was a Mr Biddle, of London, a man of eminent piety, who casting off all fear, but that of displeasing God by a cowardly suppression of a faith he believed to be the faith of Christ, printed, published and circulated his opinions concerning the person of Christ, and the unity of God, and was for this crime, after long and bitter persecution, thrown into prison, where he languished and died.* About this time flourished Milton and Locke, both of whom are known by their writings to have been Unitarians. To these honorable names may be added, in the succeeding century, those of Nathaniel Lardner, and Sir Isaac Newton. Watts also is now known, by writings which he left, to have died an Antitrinitarian, and to have expressed regret that he had been the means, through his

*1662.

very popular hymns written in his younger days, of giving so wide a circulation to doctrines, which he was compelled on more mature deliberation and inquiry to reject. Had not the copyright been sold, and become too profitable to be surrendered, he would have recalled and suppressed the book.

Of the present condition of Unitarianism abroad, it is enough to say in few words, that it exists in every part of the British empire, and boasts a clergy as learned and as pious, as any other denomination. In Transylvania, it still retains its ancient sway. In this country, its success has been great — greater than could have been looked for, when the nature of the opposition it has had to encounter is taken into view. Every passion has been inflamed against it, every prejudice enlisted, every superstitious feeling appealed to ; yet it has gone on, and though it has undoubtedly been greatly hindered and oppressed by these measures, it still has gone on and prospered. In almost every state it has its churches — in every little community its intelligent advocates and friends.

And now if the question be asked, which will natually arise, why, if these opinions are true, and have the antiquity which is claimed for them, they have not prevailed faster and farther, it may be answered ; — that the history now given of them furnishes a satisfactory reply, in that spirit of deadly hate and hostility with which men have waged war against them. Trinitarianism was established, as we have seen, in the fourth century. That barbarous age allowed freely every penalty,

even that of death, in its most frightful forms, to be visited upon those who departed from the orthodox faith. The same principles have been acted upon almost ever since. What were the consequences? Those which were unavoidable in the nature of things. Men did not *dare*, after the faith of Athanasius was thus established and in power, to think for themselves, or if they dared to think, did not dare to speak. And during the dark ages, with here and there a solitary exception, the light of Unitarian Christianity accordingly went out. It was a dead and forgotten thing. But when courage was once more the Christian's birthright, through the noble efforts of Luther and the reformers, immediately there sprung up those, in the general cry of liberty, who spoke in behalf of the truth and beauty of Unitarian Christianity — who pleaded for the reformation, that it might not pause at the threshold, but press on and hold its seat in the inner temple and at the very altar of truth. But for this the world was not ready. And even the reformers themselves, some of whom suffered death at the hands of the Roman priesthood, and all of whom knew that if they fell into their power it would also be *their* certain fate, were weak enough, inconsistent enough, cruel enough, to visit the same punishment upon those, who in their opinion were guilty of the unpardonable sin of rejecting more than they did — of rejecting the doctrine of the Trinity. Yes, it was at the instigation of a Protestant reformer, that Servetus met his fate. And when sectarians of every other name among Protestants were tolerated, yet because the Trinity was denied, the full phial of civil and religious rage was poured out upon the unhappy Unitarians of Poland. Under such treat-

ment, who would dare to declare himself a believer in the divine unity ? Who that knew his estate, his good name, his liberty, or his life must answer for it, would dare to say, though he believed it with his whole heart, that there is but one God, even the Father ? Some few indeed did it, and paid for their sincerity and noble courage with their lives. But in the nature of things, many could not be expected to do it.

But it is asked again, why, in this age of religious toleration, since Unitarianism has awaked in England, and enjoyed the labor and services of such eminent men as Priestley, Wakefield, Emlyn, Cappe, and a host of others, it has not received a wider growth, and a more popular belief. The answer is the same. The war of religious and civil persecution has been waged against it ; the people have been taught by their guides to look upon Unitarians as worse than Deists, the heirs of everlasting perdition; and they have been changed to enemies. They have had no courage, and no desire, to inquire for themselves, nor run any risk of believing truths, the avowal of which would bring upon them so heavy a burden of public odium. Even so late as the latter end of the last century, the rabble of Birmingham, in England, set on by a bigoted priesthood, assaulted the house of Dr Priestley, destroyed his property, burned his papers, and were the means of driving him from his country to seek an asylum here. — It cannot be believed, that this would have happened to him, had he been a good member of the Church of England, let his politics have been what they might.

Is it wonderful that opinions have no chance of success, when in this way they are not permitted to stand on the ground of their own merits and evidence, but are

tried at the bar of those three unrighteous judges, superstition, prejudice and bigotry? Has truth a fair hearing? We may with greater reason wonder that it has made the progress it has—that so many, in the face of the great evils that have threatened them, have had courage to come out and make a stand for their faith. We may look upon it as no slight proof of the truth of these doctrines, of the deep foundation they have in the word of God and in the affections of those who once embraced them, that they have been able, notwithstanding the formidable array of power and prejudice against them, so to overleap the barriers, and run so far and wide over the land.

We have, in the foregoing pages, presented some of the grounds, upon which rest the claims of Unitarian Christianity to a high antiquity. Could it be traced back no farther than the time of Arius and Sabellius, still it could not with propriety be denominated a new opinion. Whether it be true, is another question, and to be determined by inquiries of an entirely different character. It is a sad error to suppose a doctrine true because it is old. The truth of Unitarianism can be ascertained only by an appeal to the fountain of all true religion, the words of Jesus Christ as recorded by the Evangelists. We believe Unitarian Christianity to be the only true Christianity, and for that reason, the oldest. And we are not more confident, that it is the oldest and the truest, than that it will ere long triumph over all the various forms of error, which now prevail in the church. It has now, we trust, in the providence of God, come forth from obscurity for the last time, never to disappear again, till it shall expire with the Gospel itself.

As it began its career under the ministry of Christ and his Apostles, it will never close it, till the religion which they taught shall have answered all the designs contemplated by its almighty Author. May the time soon come, in this happy land, when Christians will dare to think and believe for themselves on this great subject. May the time come, when man shall no more dare to overawe, by threats or other means, his neighbor's mind in the formation or expression of his religious opinions, than he will to oppress or abridge his civil and political freedom. Then, — when Christians shall look at the subject with free and unbiassed minds, acting without fear of man or bodies of men, and it shall be esteemed honorable, and not reproachful, for a man to form his own opinions, — then may we look with certainty to the universal spread of the great truths, which we now labor to extend — then will the fabric of corrupt Christianity crumble and fall, as a thing that cannot stand in the light of free inquiry, enlightened reason, and sound scriptural interpretation.

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SEVENTH SEMIANNUAL REPORT

OF HIS SERVICE AS A

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'The most effectual way to check the growth of great offences, is, to check the growth of little ones.'—*London Quarterly Review, January*, 1831.

'The experiment made of the Institution for the reformation of Juvenile Offenders, under the admirable system of discipline and education adopted by the highly gifted and benevolent Principal of the House, is most encouraging; and leaves nothing to regret, but the want of means to extend its usefulness. To provide these, and thus to rescue from crime and ruin the unfortunate objects who might there find an asylum, would be an occupation at all times worthy of the persevering attention of the city government'.—*Address of the Mayor to the City Council of Boston, on the 3d of January*, 1831.

'The best penitentiary institution which was ever devised by the art, and established by the beneficence of man, is, in all probability, the House for the reformation of Juvenile Delinquents.'—*Governor Clinton's Message to the New York Legislature.*

'It is a rare occurrence indeed to find persons of cultivated minds in an Alms-House.'—*Report of the Commissioners of the New York Alms-House, September*, 1830.

REPORT.

To the Executive Committee of the
American Unitarian Association.

Gentlemen, — There is no single topic belonging to the great subjects of poverty and crime, which is in itself so important, and has so strong a claim upon public interest, as the condition of the morally neglected and vicious children, a large part of whom, if they shall be left to the influences under which they are now living, will inevitably become early proficients in depravity, lost to all that is truly good and happy, and the bane of society; and, if they shall not be brought to our prisons, and even fall the victims of violated law, will almost certainly live in a state of abject want, and die in the debasement of unrepented sin. I referred to this topic in the close of my last Report, and I beg leave here to resume it. Would that I could speak of it in a manner in any degree commensurate with the greatness of its claims, whether we regard the individuals immediately concerned in it, or those without whose instrumentality they cannot be rescued from the ruin which threatens them; or, whether we look to the immediate, or the final conse-

quences, of the ignorance, transgression, and exposures in which we find them.

I could neither satisfy myself, nor others, by any general language upon this topic. The principal cause, I am persuaded, of the little interest which is felt in it, is, the vagueness of general conception concerning it; and this is to be obviated only by a statement of facts, by which the character and extent of the evil to be remedied may be distinctly seen. I rejoice indeed to know, that there is in our community a very widely extended, and an active sympathy, as well with the moral, as with the physical condition of the poor. But this sympathy is not yet, by any means, what it should be. It is too general, where it should be particular; and therefore too indefinite, to awaken the strong sense which should be felt of personal obligation in the cause. It has indeed provided two ministers for the religious instruction of seamen, and five others exclusively for the service of the poor. Nor is this all. To myself at least, — and I know not how far to others, — it has most liberally extended the means of adding to moral and religious instruction, the relief, to large numbers, of pressing want, and of severe suffering. Yet this ministry will very partially accomplish the objects which ought to be comprehended in it, if it shall fail to call forth in its supporters a stronger feeling of their moral relation to the poor; if it shall fail of bringing them into a closer connexion with the less prospered classes of their fellow-beings; and if it shall be viewed, and maintained, as a substitute for the personal services, which might otherwise, perhaps, be thought obligatory. I should indeed look with no pleasure upon this ministry, if I must feel

that its tendency will be to lessen the sense of obligation in its patrons, according to their means and opportunities to do what they can, not only for the temporary relief, but for the permanent improvement and the salvation of those, to whom they may extend their personal interest, and care, and kindness. I have endeavored, therefore, in my Reports, to call forth in those for whom they are intended, a feeling of personal responsibleness in the work of improving the condition, by improving the character of society among us. On the topic upon which I would now address you, this feeling is of an importance which can hardly be exaggerated. If the evils of which I am to speak be in any due degree apprehended, they will, and they must, excite this feeling in the breast of every Christian, of every philanthropist among us.

I have said, that the prevailing conceptions respecting these children are vague. That I may do what I can to awaken the interest that should be felt in them, I will attempt to classify them. There is a great difference of condition, and of character among them, and very different measures are to be taken for their rescue, and happiness. In regard to these measures, in certain cases, there may be a diversity of opinion; and if any may be proposed, that are wiser than those I shall suggest, I shall heartily rejoice in the preference which may be given to them. But I think there will be no difference of opinion upon the question, should these children, or should they not, be disregarded by us? As citizens, as philanthropists, as Christians, can we justify our neglect of them?

Of the children of whom I have spoken, let me first call your attention to those who are between seven and fourteen years of age. And of these, I would first speak of *the boys*, whom I would divide into three classes.

The *first* class consists of those who cannot read, and who therefore cannot obtain admission into our grammar schools.

It may be asked by some,— have we, in truth, children in our city, who are at an age to be in our grammar schools, but who cannot read well enough to enter them? I answer, — we have. Four years ago there was a school in Scott's court, supported by private contributions, expressly for children of this description. This school was so maintained for eighteen months; and there were in it, during that time, seventy children, about three fourths of whom were boys. In that school, thirty children were fitted to enter a grammar school; of whom, twentyfour were placed in one or another of our grammar schools, and employment was found for the remaining six, either in the city or the country. And had there been three similar schools in other parts of the city, I have no doubt they might have been supplied with an equal number of children, as unqualified as these were for our free schools. Some of these were the children of parents who had neglected to send them to our preparatory, or primary schools. But a still greater number were the children of foreigners, or of parents who had removed from the country to the city; and they were brought here unable to read, at an age at which they could not be sent to our primary schools. Now it is very absurd to say, that this is an

unavoidable evil; that we have no accountableness for the ignorance of these children; and that they must therefore be left to take the consequences of the poverty and crime into which they may fall. The truth is, that, to a great extent at least, the evil may be remedied. Besides, let it be considered, that these children are to continue with us, and are by and by to form a part of our efficient population, for weal or for wo. And it is not only probable, but almost certain, that if they shall be left to grow up in their ignorance, they will not only be poor, but a large, and probably the largest, part of them will be grossly vicious. Nor can it be, that we should not be partakers of the consequences of their poverty and vice. They must, should they fall into want, or crime, be supported from our property, either through charity, or taxation, or theft. There is then a strong immediate interest concerned in the question, should we, or should we not, make some provision for these children?

Of this class, however, I would make two divisions. The first division consists of those who are profane, and vulgar in conversation; impertinent in manners; regardless of parental authority; fond of ardent spirits; accustomed to falsehood; and, as far as they can be at their age, to petty gambling, and to pilfering. — The second division consists of those, who, either from having been under less unfavorable influences at home, or from less natural strength of propensity and passion, have not fallen into the vices of the first division. These, if brought under the instruction which will qualify them for our grammar schools, by this care alone might be recovered, and probably be trained to be worthy citizens,

and good men. But other measures are required for the salvation of those of the first division. These measures, however, are within the scope of our power; and ours will be the fault if we fail to enforce them.

The *second* class consists of those, who, although they can read, and might therefore be in our grammar schools, either have not yet been placed in them, or from various causes have been taken from them by their parents.

Of those who can read, but are not known to our instructers, and are idlers and vagrants when they should be at school, some by reason of the poverty, but a greater number through the inefficiency, or the vicious habits of their parents, were either allowed to run at large at the time when they should have been transferred from the primary to the grammar schools; or they were kept from school for the sake of the occasional services they could render, in obtaining food and fuel for their families. Some of these are also the children of foreigners, and of parents from the country, who have neglected to avail themselves of the privileges of our free schools. And of those who have been in these schools and have been taken from them, some are the children of parents who could not, or who, at the expense of the least self-denial, would not, obtain the books that were required for them. Some, as I have been told by parents, were allowed to leave school, because it was intended to send them into the country; — an intention which has been delayed, till it has been forgotten. And some have been removed from school, to be placed in shops and offices, from which they have been dismissed

for unfaithfulness, or because their services were no longer wanted. — Of this class I would likewise form two divisions, corresponding with those of the first. In one division I would place those, who, in disposition and practice, are vicious; who are corrupting one another, and will corrupt all who shall have intercourse with them. However qualified, as far as knowledge is concerned, for our grammar schools, these ought not to be admitted into them. Other provision should be made for them. In the other division I would place those, who, with better moral dispositions, and a higher order of general character, require only the intervention of one interested in their well-being to place them in our free schools. Admitted and fixed there, and still kept under the kindly eye of the friend who interposed to save them, they would probably be made useful, respectable and happy.

The *third* class consists of truants from our schools. Of these also I would form two divisions.

The first division consists of those, who have lost their places in our grammar schools, and are stricken from the lists of the teachers. Even among these, however, an important distinction is to be recognised. By far the largest part of this division consists of those, who ought not to be sent again to our free schools. They are associates, and are partakers of the vices, of the worst division of the two first classes; and are not behind them in any wickedness. But there are those among them, who, from mere weakness of character, and the absence of all judicious restraints at home, have been led away by the persuasions, or the artifices, of others. These, if taken into the moral charge of a

friend, or of friends, who will watch over and encourage them, may be restored to the schools from which they have been excluded. I would not, therefore, have them confounded with those, for whose salvation, if it is to be obtained, other and more authoritative measures must be taken. — In the second division I would place those, who are but occasionally, and even those who are frequently but not habitually, truants; and who, if unchecked and unguarded, will soon fall into the first division of this class. Of this division I would observe, that all should be considered as recoverable, merely by a restoration of them to our free schools. No boy becomes at once an obdurate truant, or in any respect obdurately vicious. But he who has begun to be a truant, if he shall be left uncared for, will probably sink into the corruption of those with whom he seeks his pleasures, and become a vagrant. The restoration of a boy of this description to our free schools, I consider, therefore, as the most important service which can possibly be rendered to him. Nor is it an unimportant service to the whole community of which he is a member.

I must say a few words also of the *female children*, who should be, but are not in our schools. These I would likewise divide into three classes.

In the *first class* I would place those, who cannot read well enough to be received into our grammar schools. And where this is the only cause which keeps them from school, it would seem that it could not be very difficult to obtain a remedy of the evil. There could hardly be a wiser economy than that of maintaining three or four charity schools in the city, for boys and

girls of this description. There is now in Salem street, one school of this sort for girls, which has been kept three and a half years. Its number is limited to fifty; and the average number in it is forty. But it is often full. I have no doubt this school has been for the moral salvation of many.

The *second class* consists of those, who, having been kept from school by the inability, or the failure from other causes, of their parents to purchase the books required for them, are growing up in ignorance, and exposed to every moral danger. Where the evil arises from parental neglect, the parent is to be excited to his or her duty to the child. And much may be done in giving this excitement to parents who need it. And where there is an actual inability to obtain the books required, there is benevolence enough in our community, if it can be felt that the kindness will not be abused, to meet the necessities of every parent and child in the city who shall so need it.

The *third class* are the children of parents, who have little or no care for the intellectual, or the moral culture of their offspring. Girls of this description are frequently to be seen in our streets, in the filthy and tattered garments, which indicate the character of the poverty in which they live at home. Some of them, however, by their attire, would intimate better things of those who have the charge of them. These girls are sometimes the playfellows of the vicious boys of their age, and are scarcely less viciously inclined. The best condition to be hoped for concerning them, if left to go on in the course in which they now are, is one of abject poverty. But it is at least equally probable, that they

will become as corrupt, as they are ignorant and destitute.

I repeat, that the children of whom I have here spoken are under fourteen years of age. Is it asked, how many, probably, are there of these children? I answer, certainly not less, I think, than between three and four hundred.

But there is another, and a very large class, which forces itself upon our notice, and which has not less claims upon the interest and sympathy of our community. I refer to the boys, between fourteen, and sixteen or seventeen years of age, *who are without any regular employment;* and a large part of whom, if neglected, will at best become paupers, and probably sink into the debasement even of the grossest sins.

This class consists principally, but not wholly, of those who have arrived at this period of life without having received the elementary instruction, which would have qualified them to have served as apprentices in the different mechanic employments; and of those who, as truants, and as otherwise vicious, have learned to prefer a life of vagrancy. Of these I would form one division. But this class comprehends also a considerable number, who have been employed as errand boys, but from various causes have lost their places, and are thus daily brought into connexion with the above named classes of idlers; and of some also, who, having completed their term at school, are *wanting places*, and in the meantime are wandering through our streets, to find companions or pleasure, where they may. Of these, I would form another division. Even of the first, and worst division, however, it may reasonably

be assumed, that nearly all may be recovered to a life of usefulness. And of the last division, it ought to be held, that *all may be saved.*

The character and condition of the bad boys of this class is the most pitiable, the most deplorable, which can well be imagined. And they have strong claims upon us, because, in truth, their own is not the heaviest part of the responsibility for their characters, and for their offences. There is a greater weight of accountableness for their condition upon others. Many, and perhaps most of them, have been reared amidst the worst examples; and never knew the kindly influence of an affectionate and a religious interest in their welfare and happiness. And never can they know it, but through the sympathy of those, who will seek them out, that they may save them. Let any one, then, who is accustomed to pass them unnoticed, but who would know, as far as he may by seeing them, who, and wha they are, look about him as he passes through Sea Street, or Broad Street. Let him go upon our large wharves, especially in the northern parts of the city, or to Faneuil Hall Market, and look at those who are daily to be seen there. Let him ask the Superintendent of our market, or our wharfingers, respecting these boys, and their means of subsistence? It is not a question, whether, living as they now live, they are every day becoming more and more depraved, and more and more fitted for aggravated crime; nor, whether they are daily extending the corrupting influence of their example to others much younger than themselves, as well as to many of their own age. But it is a question, which should engage the serious consideration of all among us,

whether measures cannot be devised, which will be effectual for their salvation?*

Let us then fairly meet the question, how are these evils, as far as they exist, to be remedied; and, how may we most effectually prevent a recurrence of them?

I reply, that, for the purpose both of cure and of prevention, the first thing requisite is a right apprehension, by the intelligent and moral among us, of the extent and character of these evils, and of personal obligation to supply a remedy.

In my last Report, I spoke of an enlightened public sentiment respecting the extent and true character of any evils existing in a community, as the first in order, and the most important, of the means of arresting, of remedying, and of preventing a recurrence of these evils. And grateful indeed should I be, if I could do anything to call forth this sentiment, in regard to the classes of children I have brought before you; for, far the greatest number of them would then be saved from the ruin with which they are now threatened. And is it not wonderful, that, in this community, so full of benevolent enterprise, and where such generous provision

* Some of the boys around Faneuil Hall Market are employed as porters, or carriers of the articles bought for families at the market. It is greatly to be regretted that these boys should find employment there; not only from the fact, that the small sums which they thus obtain are expended for vicious indulgences, but because their example induces others of their age to seek a share of this employment, for the sake of sharing in these vicious pleasures. There should be *licensed porters for our markets*, and no others should be allowed to act there in that capacity. There are many poor men in the city, whose infirmities disqualify them for hard labor; but who, as Market Porters, might obtain a comfortable support for their families.

is made for the instruction of the young; where it is so well understood that an idle, uneducated, and vicious youth is the sure presage of, and preparation for, a profligate, debased, and wretched manhood, and where there is so much solicitude among parents for the virtue, the security, and well-being of their children; is it not wonderful, that there should be among us so great a supineness, in respect to the large number of those children, of whom, if left neglected, it is quite as certain that eight out of ten will become tenants of our prisons, or at least will be vagrants, or more or less dependent on charity through their life, as it is certain that they will live for a few years? I believe, indeed, that the true character and extent of this evil are not generally understood. It is not improbable, that some may even be slow to admit, that there are, in this City of Schools, more than three hundred of an age to be in these schools, and who ought to be in them, who are yet deriving no benefit from them; and that there are probably at the least two hundred more, between the ages of fourteen and sixteen or seventeen, who are without employment, are often a heavy burden upon their parents, and are already greatly vicious for their time of life; or, as the companions of the vicious, are in the way to profligacy and crime, or at best to beggary and wretchedness. I earnestly pray that a spirit of inquiry may be awakened on this subject. I beseech the intelligent and virtuous among us; I beseech the parents, who are endeavoring to train their children to virtue, and who are aware of the danger to their children of the contaminating influence of vicious examples; and I earnestly entreat all who are interested in the cause of public order, security and happiness, to look to

the condition of the children of whom I have spoken; and then to ask, and deliberately to consider, what is their own, and the true interest of all, in regard to these children? I have said, that these children may be saved. Is it asked, how? Allow me to enter into some details in answering this question.

I have already remarked, that there is a great diversity in the moral condition of these children. Some of them, also, have anxious parents, who want nothing on earth so much, as a friend to aid them in the care and discipline of their children. Many are the children of widows, who can neither keep them at home, nor follow them abroad. And many are the children of intemperate, and of heedless and reckless parents. Different provisions are therefore to be made for them, and different dispositions to be made of them. Of those, for example, between seven and fourteen years of age, who cannot read, and cannot therefore be received in our grammar schools, far the greatest number might be rescued from the degradation to which they are exposed, by the establishment of three or four private schools, in which they might be qualified for admission into our free schools. Of the truants from our schools, many, who have not yet become strongly attached to vicious associates, might be restored to their places in these schools, and might be kept there. Many, too, of the lads from twelve to fourteen, as well as of those from fourteen to sixteen years of age, might be apprenticed to farmers, and to mechanics, *in the country*. And great is the good that is obtained, when this disposition is made of a boy who has been, or who otherwise would have been, a vagrant in our streets. And, for those who are decidedly vicious, at an age under sixteen

years, — and not for these only, but for those also, who, as truants, and as the companions of the idle and vicious, are so averse from the discipline of a school, that they are not by any persuasions to be kept there; — for these, the wisest, the best, the most effectual of all provisions, is, *the School of Reformation at South Boston.* Is it said, all this may be very well, and might indeed be conducive to great good, if it could be accomplished? And why, I ask, may it not all be accomplished? The expense to be incurred in effecting all these objects will not amount to a tenth, or even to a twentieth part of that which must be incurred for the public provision, which must ultimately be made for these very children, if they shall be suffered, as they have been, to go on increasing in numbers, and in sin. Still these objects are not to be attained without some expense. Let us then deliberately count the cost, and fairly compare it with the gain which it will bring to us.

Here, then, are some hundreds of children, who are in various ways to be provided for. And, I ask, is not the supervision of these children a charge sufficiently extensive, and requiring sufficient care and labor, for any one individual, whatever may be the capacity and suitableness for the service, which he may bring to it? Let me say, then, there should be *a Municipal Officer*, call him by what name you will, whose special duty it should be, to look to the idle, vagrant, and vicious children of the city. This, I say, should be his specific duty; for within this limitation he could have the authority of law to support him. And if this officer should do nothing more, than, availing himself of the power which existing laws will already give him to prosecute, and thus to bring to the judgment of a court, the child-

ren who ought to be sent to the School of Reformation, he would perform at once for these children, for their parents, and for the public, an invaluable service: a service which, alone, would be a rich compensation for the expense at which it must be maintained. But, though this might be the only authority with which he could be legally invested, in regard to the classes of children of whom I have spoken, the work of thus disposing of these children would constitute but a single branch of the service he might render. Let him be a man of intelligence and energy, of sound judgment and of active kindness, — a man who understands and feels what is to be lost by the moral ruin, and what is to be gained by the moral recovery, of a child. Let him take cognisance, as he should, of every child who shall be found out of school when he should be in school, and of every lad over fourteen years of age who is wandering through our streets without employment, and acquaint himself with the parents and friends of these children; and let him offer his assistance to children and to parents to obtain employment, especially in the country, for those who may be sent to farmers and mechanics there, and to restore to our schools the children who have left but who should be in them; and he will thus do as much for the prevention, as, by the authority with which he might be invested by law, he could do for the remedy of evil. I have had some, though a limited experience in each of these departments of service; and I know that very great good may be done in it. Let it be known, that there is a public officer, whose business is the charge of lawless and profligate children, and the immediate effect will be a great and powerful restraint upon those, whose dispositions and tendencies are to

evil, but whose interests and pleasures are not yet so amalgamated with those of their vicious associates, that they cannot be separated from them. Many will thus be induced to retrace their steps, and to return to duty; and many will be kept from entering the paths, the end of which they will perceive is disgrace and punishment.

I may here observe also, that the Directors of the House of Industry, and of the School of Reformation, are not allowed to apprentice, or otherwise to dispose of any of the children in these institutions, except within the limits of the commonwealth. Nor can they even meet all the applications which are made to them for children, by farmers and mechanics in the country, within these limits. Applications, however, are made also from the neighboring states for children of the poor in the city; and a standing advertisement in 'the New England Farmer,' and an occasional one in some of our city newspapers, that boys or children for the country can be supplied by the officer I have referred to, would give him facilities for a greatly advantageous disposition of a considerable number, for whom so good a provision could in no other manner be made. — I know not, indeed, how the city government could make a wiser annual appropriation of a few hundred dollars, than for the support of this office. It ought to be filled by one, who will be respected, and trusted in it; who will deserve and obtain the confidence of the parents, whose children may fall under his charge; and by one, who shall be capable of making full and satisfactory reports, both of what he shall learn upon the subjects connected with his office, and of his doings in it. It should not, therefore, be the great question in view of this office, how can it be filled most cheaply? In

my judgment, allow me to say, the question of well or ill paved streets, or of disordered or well conditioned sewers, or even of wise or unwise ordinances and establishments for the preservation of the health of the city, is of minor interest, — of secondary importance.*

Our School of Reformation is daily becoming more extensively known, and daily rising in reputation among us. Nor have I any apprehension, while it shall be in the charge of its present Superintendent, that it will disappoint any fair expectations that may be formed of its beneficial tendencies. I know, indeed, of no other individual, who could have done what Mr Wells has done in that School; and, in the very important work of making it what it should be, he is scarcely less impor-

* The School of Reformation at South Boston was opened in September, 1826. — The Rev. Mr Wells took the charge of it in November, 1828. — The number who have been sent to the school is 294. — There have been received into it, since it has been in the care of Mr Wells, 202. — There are now in the school 93 children; 84 boys, and 9 girls. — Of these 84 boys, 66 are children of Americans, and 16 of foreigners; of 2, the parentage is not known with certainty. — Of the American children, 19 were brought from the country to the city, and 45 were born in Boston. — Of these boys, 5 were taught in our primary schools, but were not transferred to a grammar school; 25 could not read when they were sent to the School of Reformation; and 53 have been truants from our schools. —— I do not think it proper to state the offences for which these boys were sent to the School of Reformation. My object is, to throw some light, if I may, upon the causes which have led to those offences; and, upon the means of their remedy, and prevention. I have, however, the highest satisfaction in being able to say, that, of 136 boys whom Mr Wells has apprenticed, 116 may fairly be viewed as *good boys*. They are doing well. Doubts are felt concerning 15; and 5 are considered as bad. If these facts will not call forth both private and public favor for this School, I know not how that favor is to be obtained for it.

tant to the institution, than the institution is to the city. But there are yet many among our intelligent citizens, who have no adequate conceptions of the character and objects of this School. It is even confounded, by not a few, with the House of Correction, to which, however, it is scarcely more like, than the House of Correction is to what it should be; and a greater dissimilarity than this can hardly be imagined. Very grateful, therefore, shall I be, if I may do anything to correct any erroneous impressions respecting it; and to awaken in any minds a stronger interest in its prosperity and success. Even as it now is, this School is exerting a redeeming power, which should awaken in our community a universal interest in the cause of maintaining and extending its usefulness. But it is susceptible of great improvements. What it has achieved, is but a strong indication of what it may do. There is, in truth, I believe, no single means that can be devised, by which so much can be done to diminish the work of our criminal courts; so much to lessen the number of the inmates of our prisons and alms-houses, and the consequent expense of these institutions; and so much at once for the salvation of those who are exposed to moral ruin, and therefore for general order and security, as by the School of Reformation, if it shall be made, what it is not only practicable, but what it will be the truest economy to make it. I have long seen and felt the defects, as well as the excellencies, of this institution. But, unwilling to give you only my own convictions on the subject, I addressed a note to the Rev. Mr Wells, the Superintendent of the School, requesting him to inform me what are the most important changes he would suggest, with a view to its more successful operation.

I feel, therefore, a strong confidence in offering the following propositions, as containing at once the results of his experience in the school, and of my own observations of it.

First. That there should be a distinct Board of Directors of the School, to be appointed annually by the city government.

Second. That the Executive Head, or Principal of the institution, should be, ex officio, a member of the Board of Directors.

Third. That a building should be erected for the institution, which should be suited, as the present building is not, for its various objects.

Fourth. That the city should procure a good farm for the institution. By means of a farm for spring, summer and autumn work, and of work-shops for winter, the boys might almost, or wholly, support themselves.

Fifth. That the Legislature be petitioned for an amendment of the present act for the incorporation of the School, by an act which shall authorize the Directors to receive from any court in this state, and authorizing also all the courts in the state to send to such Directors, any such minors convicted before such courts, as may be deemed and decided to be proper members of the School; the parents or guardians of such children, or in case of their inability the town or parish to which such children may belong, or the state, paying the institution, for the care and education of such children, at the rate of fifty dollars per year. And further authorizing such Directors to examine, and try such minors as may be brought before them, and to send such of them to the School as shall be shown and proved to be proper members of the institution; in such cases the

Board having authority to act as a court, from whose judgment there may lie an appeal to a trial by jury. And in case of commitment by such process, the parents or guardians of the children, who shall be so sent to the school, shall be required, if they shall be able to do it, to pay for the board and instruction of the children who shall be so sent, to an amount, or at a rate, not exceeding fifty dollars per year. And, in case any parent or guardian may wish to send his child or ward to this School, without any judicial process, but still because the child is refractory, and disobedient, that the Directors shall be allowed to receive such child into the school, the parent or guardian agreeing to pay for the board and education of the child, at the rate of seventy-five dollars per year; and, having also the right to take him or her from the school, at any time after the expiration of six months from the time of his or her admission to it. Also, further to authorise the Directors, or in cases of emergency the Principal of the institution, to send to any part of the commonwealth for any members of the School, who may have unlawfully left it, and to return them to the institution.

And, *Sixth.* That if the city shall not be willing to build the proposed house, it is respectfully suggested, that the city should furnish the land for it; and that a company of gentlemen, if such a company can be formed, should build the house. A mortgage of the house and land would be good security of their property to such a company; and it is believed, that a good interest on their investment might be obtained from the avails of those children, who will be sent agreeably to the provisions in the foregoing proposition; the city agreeing to use the building for the purposes for which it shall be

erected, and reserving the right, at will and on terms to be agreed upon, of purchasing it of the stockholders.

Little, I trust, need be said, of the importance of a new and very different building from that now used, for the purposes of this institution; of a building at once suited for security of the inmates against elopement, and yet having as little as may be of the structure and the appearance of a prison. The fact is, that for far the greatest number of boys in this School, after a short residence in it, no peculiar provisions for confinement would be required. But such provisions would be requisite *for some*, and must therefore be made. Still they should not be extended beyond the necessity of the case. It is important, also, for the purposes of the institution, that there should be a building, which will admit of classifications and divisions of the children sent to it; and, which will be favorable to the various work, in which it may be thought proper to employ them. By the admirable discipline and order which he has established in his School, Mr Wells has done all, which I believe any man could do, to obviate the disadvantages which are inseparable from the building, in which the School is now established. — But I leave this topic, convinced that, should the interest which it deserves be excited in regard to the institution, the first improvement which will be called for will be a house, which shall be suited for the purposes of *a School of Reformation*. There are, however, two other topics suggested in these propositions, of which I beg leave to say a few words.

First. What is the great end, and aim, of this institution; and, how should it be viewed, and represented by us?

I answer, in the words of Mr Sargeant, President of a similar institution in Philadelphia, 'it is, in the strictest sense of the terms, a work of charity and mercy. Whatever else may be contemplated, — and certainly extensive public advantages are to be expected from it, — is only incidental. This School presents no vindictive, or reproachful aspects. It threatens no humiliating recollections of the past. It holds out no degrading denunciations for the future.' It is, indeed, a School for those who have greatly violated duty, and are to be *reformed.* But though its inmates are sent to it by public authority, and can be discharged from it only by the authority of those who sent them there; and though in leaving the institution they are to pass into the charge of others, who will be accountable for them till they shall be of lawful age to those, from whose immediate watchfulness and care they have received them; still it is to be regarded, *not as a prison,* but *as a school.* Mr Wells considers every boy who enters his school as *reclaimable.* His object is, to give to each one an intellectual, a physical and a moral education, which will prepare him to be a respectable and a respected member of society — a useful and happy man. And most encouraging is the promise of this institution. Let not the children, then, who are sent there, unnecessarily be made to feel, that they have the brand of crime upon their foreheads, and that they are to be recognised as having been criminals. Many of them are not morally worse than are other boys, who will not be sent there; and who, through the faithful guardianship of judicious and kind friends, into whose charge it has been their privilege to fall, will be recovered to virtue, and loved and valued as if they had never fallen from it.

To treat them as if they are reclaimable, and will unquestionably be reclaimed, will be one of the most effectual means of securing their salvation.

Secondly. Who are the proper subjects of this institution; and, how are they to be sent to it, and retained in it?

I would reply, that, except under very extraordinary circumstances, no one should be admitted into this School, while he is under ten years of age. But, with certain restrictions, it should be open to any one under twenty years old. The extreme age to which any one should be sent there, with a view to apprenticeship in the country, should, perhaps, be fifteen years; with the opportunity of remaining a year in preparation for this apprenticeship. But if any shall be sent who are over sixteen years of age, it should be for discipline and instruction, preparatory to a whaling voyage. And unspeakably great would be the gain to the individual and to the community, if, instead of sending any minor either to our Jail or House of Correction, where a confinement of a fortnight or three weeks only will almost certainly complete and insure his moral ruin, our courts were required to sentence every criminal who is brought before them under lawful age, unless he shall be sent to the State Prison, to the School of Reformation; there to remain, only till a voyage can be obtained for him, which will remove him for one or perhaps two years from the scenes and associates of the iniquity, from which he has been taken. I know not, indeed, how public attention is to be aroused to a sense of the magnitude and enormity of the evils of our two county prisons. There is a strange indifference, a most lamentable apathy among us, in regard to

these institutions, the influences of which are almost exclusively of the worst character. They are almost as certainly fatal to every remaining principle of virtue in the young who are sent to them, as would be a pest house to him who is predisposed to small pox or to plague. But I will not here dwell upon them; especially as but a brief space remains which I can occupy in this Report.*

I have spoken of the ages, within which I think members should be admitted into the School. In regard to character, I would say, that it should be a school, not for those only who have fallen into crime; but for those also, of whom there is a moral certainty, that if left to themselves they will soon become criminals. I would not indeed propose any encroachment upon the rights of parents, or upon the proper liberty of children. But applications have been made to me by parents, to obtain a place for their children in this School, because these children were wholly beyond their control and

* I have wished to ascertain the number of lads who have been sent to our House of Correction. But the ages of those committed to this prison are not recorded in the books of the institution. By a reference, however, to the names of those who have been committed since the 2d of December, 1823, — the date at which one of the turnkeys began his service there, — it is recollected by this turnkey, that *eightysix, between the ages of* 10 *and* 17 *years*, have been sent to this prison. This number, considerable as it is, is yet, without doubt, short of the number of the lads, who within this term have been sent there. We may, I think, safely suppose this number to be a hundred. I know not how this fact may be viewed by others. But to my mind it is an evil which cries to heaven for a remedy. — Of the eightysix who are distinctly remembered, three have been committed 6 times; one 5 times; three 4 times; five 3 times; and five twice.

were in the way to destruction, while yet they had committed no offence cognisable by the laws. To such parents I would give the privilege of committing their children to the charge of this institution. But in cases of this kind, as well as in many others, I would save parents and friends from the painful necessity of a prosecution of children in the Police Court. Let it be that there are cases, in which a trial in open court is rightfully to be required and insisted upon. All I contend for is, that there are others, in which it is neither necessary nor expedient; and that it is expedient, and will save from much suffering and will conduce to no evil, if a more private trial may be had, with the decisions of which all the parties concerned may be entirely satisfied.

As the law now is, no one can be sent to the School of Reformation, but through the Police, or the Municipal Court. And if, indeed, they must pass through one of our existing courts, I have no objection to the law as it now stands. No one has a higher respect for the Judges of these courts, than I have. They are worthy of entire respect and confidence. But why may not the Legislature give to the Directors of this School a judicial power, for the specific purpose of sending or of committing children to the School; with the right reserved to parents, guardians and friends, of appeal to either of our higher courts? There would be here no more abridgment of personal liberty, than there is in the constitution of our Police Court. And why make it indispensable to arraign children before a court, where they are exposed to the gaze of a crowd, no eye of which should see them? Why oblige parents, and even mothers, to the distressing necessity of appearing,

as they now sometimes must, in this court, amidst the assemblage which is there gathered, as the accusers on oath of their children? I have seldom witnessed a keener anguish of soul, than I have seen in a mother while laboring to bring herself to the resolution required for this duty; and even when she had brought herself to the energy demanded for the discharge of it. And not only will the feelings of parents and friends be respected and saved from the most painful laceration, by this change in the mode of committing children to the School; and not only, when this change shall be understood, will even parents be comparatively happy and grateful, that they may appear before one or more members of this Board to state their grievances respecting their obdurate and ungovernable children; but the children themselves will be made to feel, that, while they are sent to this School by a Board, which has all the authority which law can give to it, they are yet by the very manner of their commitment treated as offending children, — and not as if they belonged to the class, and were sharers of the guilt, of veteran and confirmed transgressors. It is worthy of consideration too, that by this provision the characters and moral necessities of the children received into the School will at once be known, as they now cannot be, to the Superintendent and Directors of it; a very important circumstance in view of the disposition to be made of them, in placing them out as apprentices. I earnestly ask for a serious consideration of this subject. It will, I think, at once approve itself to the minds of many. And I can hardly believe that any one, who may at first view it with some scepticism, will after a little sober thought respecting it withhold from it his hearty approbation.

To conceive adequately and justly of the subject of which I have spoken, it must be understood, that, however various are the circumstances under which individuals are brought to pauperism and crime, and however numerous the examples which may be adduced of those, who under the best means of general education and the best religious and moral influences have sunk into want, debasement and wretchedness; it is still true, that all these are exceptions, which confirm rather than disprove the principle, that the great security of the well-being of each one, and of the virtue, order and happiness of society, is in the widest possible extension of an early culture of the intellectual and moral nature. It lies in provisions for that elementary education, which will qualify each one intelligently to discharge the duties of the station in which he is to be placed; and, in the maintenance of that early watchfulness, encouragement and discipline of the young, on the part both of parents and friends, by which an early regard to God and to Jesus Christ, and an early sense of truth and duty and accountableness, are to be awakened, and kept in exercise, in the soul. Let us then most sedulously watch over the interests of our common and our Sunday schools; and do what we may to maintain and to extend a wise, a kindly and a christian discipline in our own, and in the families of those to whom we may extend the offices of christian friendship.

No fair mind will dispute the principle, that, however knowledge may be perverted and religious and moral influences resisted and the privileges and opportunities of virtuous advancement abused, these are yet the only means on which we may rely for the stability of the institutions, on which rest public prosperity and all

which makes social life a blessing. No man ever felt this principle more strongly than the fathers of New England; nor is there anything in the inheritance we have received from them, which is more to be prized, than the sentiment which prevails in this section of our country, respecting the duty of providing for the faithful instruction of the young. The noblest, the most deeply founded, and that which will be the most enduring monument of their wisdom, their foresight and their claims to perpetual veneration and gratitude, is the institution of the free schools, by which the means of an education adequate to the ordinary exigencies of life are extended to every family, however poor, in the city and the commonwealth. They were *men*, and had their weaknesses and errors. But whatever were their errors, in this, at least, all will acknowledge that they were *right*. And, whatever were their weaknesses, here they displayed a greatness of moral strength above almost all of their age. Who that knows his obligations to them, has not blessed God in a remembrance of these excellent men, when passing through our villages and towns he has seen everywhere, at short distances between, the school-houses, where the children of the affluent, of the middling classes, and of the poorest are either sitting together at their tasks on the same forms and under the same instructers; or, without distinction of outward condition, are mingling together their affections and interests in the same sports and gambols, around the place to which they go to be taught; and which will only be remembered by them to the last hour of life with a feebler feeling of delight, than the very home of their childhood?

Would that the inestimable worth of these nurseries of

knowledge and virtue were felt, as it should be, by every parent in our state!* When looking at the institutions in our city, on which does the mind rest its strongest confidence, that the blessings by which we are distinguished will be transmitted to our descendants? Where is our strongest bulwark against ignorance, infidelity, recklessness and crime? Where does the parent, solicitous fo, his young children, look beyond home and beyond his church for the influences, by which they are to be

* The tenants of Alms-houses and of Prisons are not of those only who have been reared in the city. There are uneducated and undisciplined children in our country towns, whose condition calls loudly for the sympathy of those, whose proper business and duty it is to have a moral care for them. In a recent ride, in which I passed through some of the most flourishing villages of our commonwealth, I witnessed the painful spectacle of ten or a dozen children, from ten to fourteen years of age, gathered in groups on the green before a tavern, for the same petty gambling which is seen among children of the same class in the by-places of the capital. And who can doubt whether these children are rearing for poverty and crime? I know not, indeed, which is most painful, the spectacle of children so employed; or, of the parents, and of the religious and civil guides in whose very neighborhood these children live, either passing them daily without even a consciousness of their employment and their danger, or looking upon them without one feeling of obligation to attempt their moral recovery. Even a single individual in either of these villages, at a comparatively very small expense of time and labor, might secure a competent education for almost every child in the village in which he lives; and without any force or unkindness, break up and prevent all associations for vicious purposes among the young. All, indeed, are not qualified for this, or for any office. But there are those in every village, who by assuming this agency may make themselves its best benefactors; and scarcely less the benefactors of their country. Few of my Reports, I believe, find their way into the country. But I shall have done no little good, if I can call the attention even of one true philanthropist there to this interesting subject.

trained for usefulness, respectability, and happiness? There is one answer to all these inquiries. Our eighty free schools, supported by a tax most willingly paid of $65,000, with their doors open alike to the poorest as to the richest, are, even more than our hundred and fifty private schools, the treasure and delight of every Christian patriot among us, whether he have or have not children to send to them.* It should be known, however, and pondered, that there are many children, even in our city, who should be in these schools but who are not in them. These, as well as the older children to whom I have referred, are at an age, at which they may be reclaimed and saved. Where, then, rests responsibility concerning them? Let me speak plainly on this subject. It rests, in part upon the city government; and, in part upon all of us in the more prospered conditions of society, who could, if we would, do much for the salvation of these children. And is not their salvation a far higher, as well as a less costly object, than are most of the interests which engage public attention? Is not their advancing moral ruin one of the greatest of the calamities to be apprehended by us? If these children are finally to be the victims of their vices, the tenants of our prisons, or are in any way to drag out a degraded and miserable existence, awful, as it seems to me, is the account which must be rendered of this evil, by those who are in full possession of the means by which it might be prevented.

* In the report made in 1829, in compliance with an act of the Legislature requiring a triennial return of the several schools in the commonwealth, we are told that our 80 free schools then contained 7,430 pupils; and our 155 private schools, 4,018. In these 235 schools, there were therefore 11,488 pupils.

In bringing before you the classes of children described in this Report and the means of their moral recovery, it may have seemed that I have laid an undue stress upon the influence of general and public education, while I have but glanced at the most important means, as well of remedying, as of preventing evil; that is, the faithful maintenance of domestic discipline and of domestic instruction. No one, however, more readily than I, will accede to the doctrine, of the paramount claims and importance of domestic education. But I could not have despatched this topic in a few words, and therefore would not introduce it in a connexion, in which I could not have done justice to it. Yet I may say, let the measures be taken, which I have recommended for the salvation of the children of whom I have spoken, and not a little will thus be done to aid the cause of family government; to give a new impulse to parents in the moral charge of their children; and to children, an increased sense of the duty they owe to their parents, and of the connexion at once between virtue and happiness and between vice and misery. Much also may and will be done by a faithful ministry for the poor, in aid of this great means of individual and of social good. — But I must desist. Glad and grateful shall I be, if I may be an instrument even of the smallest advancement of any one of the means, whether preventive or remedial, of saving and blessing even one of those, who but for the intervention of christian sympathy would have been unheeded; and but for a christian watchfulness excited by that sympathy would have been *lost*.

I have preached but seldom during the last six months. The services of the chapel within this time have been performed by a few of my friends, to whom I wish that I could make any better return than an assurance of my hearty gratitude. Whether these services can be continued as they have been, I know not. I am compelled, however, to say, that I cannot preach. If any gentleman can be found, who is disposed to cooperate with me in my work and whom you shall approve, the charge of the chapel might devolve on him; and to do what I can to obtain the services of such an one, I beg leave to say, that whenever you may be pleased to make the appointment, I will relinquish to my colleague any part or the whole of the salary which I receive from you; and will fail in no endeavor to aid him in the most efficient discharge of his duties. — From the date of my last Report I had no check in my service, till the close of February; when I was suddenly taken off from it by an illness, which confined me for five weeks. I have however, as I think, passed a very useful winter. The weather during a part of the time was very severe; and large numbers of the poor were wholly unable to obtain the employment, by which to provide for their families. But I am not aware that there has been any extraordinary suffering among us. There was a large demand for private benevolence, and it was largely answered. The benefactors of my poor's purse, old and young, known and unknown, may be assured that I have the strongest sense of their kindness; and that a very great extent of want has been relieved by it.

Very respectfully

JOSEPH TUCKERMAN.

BOSTON, MAY 5TH, 1831.

NOTICE.

Mr Tuckerman began his ministry for the poor in Boston on the 5th of November, 1826. Four quarterly reports were printed in the first year of his ministry, and six semiannual reports have since been published. The general topics of the preceding semiannual reports have been, — 'The importance of a permanent ministry for the poor of cities; and of the employment of a sufficient number in this ministry, to secure a moral charge of the families, which cannot be brought under the pastoral care of the ministers of the churches of any city.' — 'The qualifications to be required in ministers for the poor.' — 'The claims and benefits of this ministry; and, the wages given to the poor.' — 'The causes of the number of the poor in Boston, and the means which will be most effectual for relieving their wants.' — 'The classes and conditions of the poor; the kinds and degrees of poverty.' — And, 'The tendency of cities to an accumulation of poverty and vice; and the importance of an enlightened public sentiment on this subject, as the best means by which to remedy, and to prevent, the growth of these evils.' The subject of poverty, in these reports, has been treated with a particular reference to Boston. But it is believed, that a more than usual interest is now felt in many parts of our country upon all the questions which relate to poverty and crime; and, under this conviction, it is thought that Mr Tuckerman's reports may be acceptable beyond the limits of our city. The Executive Committee of the American Unitarian Association have therefore determined, in future to publish these reports as parts of their first series of tracts. Though the objects of Mr Tuckerman's ministry are of a local character, yet as this ministry is under the patronage of the Association, it is thought that it will not be improper to avail ourselves of this means of calling forth a more extended and active sympathy, in the cause of improving the character and condition of the less prospered classes of our fellow beings.

1st Series. No. 49.

THE

REPORTS

OF THE AMERICAN

UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION,

PREPARED FOR THE

SIXTH ANNIVERSARY,

MAY 24, 1831.

BOSTON,
GRAY AND BOWEN, 141 WASHINGTON STREET.
JULY, 1831.

Price 6 Cents.

NOTICE.

The Executive Committee have determined to publish the Annual Reports in the first series of tracts. The delay in the present instance, has been occasioned by disappointment in not receiving a report of the speeches made at the Anniversary, from a person who took notes at the time. After an interval of weeks, a brief sketch only, of the Addresses could be prepared. This explanation is due both to the gentlemen who spoke, and to the members of the Association.

SIXTH ANNIVERSARY.

The American Unitarian Association celebrated their sixth anniversary on Tuesday evening, May 24, 1831. The meeting was opened in the Berry street Vestry, at half past six o'clock, Dr Bancroft, the President, in the chair.

The records of the last anniversary having been read, the Treasurer's annual Statement of Receipts and Expenditures was read and accepted.

Boston, May 24, 1831.

To the Executive Committee of the American Unitarian Association.

Gentlemen, — As Treasurer of the Association, I herewith submit my annual Account, and a statement of the Receipts and Expenditures of the Association for the past year. The balance in the Treasury this day is $729 78; of which sum $501 19 belongs to the fund for the support of a Missionary to the poor of this city, and the balance $228 59 to the general funds of the Association, and can be appropriated in such manner as you may direct.

In addition to the sum credited as received for Tracts sold by the General Agents, Tracts to the amount of $327 38 have been sent to London; and I hold their obligation to pay that sum, whenever the money shall be received by them.

Respectfully, your ob't serv't,

HENRY RICE.

STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND EXPENDITURES OF THE AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION, FROM MAY 25, 1830, TO MAY 24, 1831.

RECEIPTS.

Balance in the Treasury May 25, 1830, - -		$1132 90
From 74 Annual Subscribers, - - -	121	
" Auxiliary Societies, - - -	692 03	
" several Unitarian Societies, for the support of a Domestic Missionary in Boston,* - - - -	1146 94	
		1959 97
Carried up,		$3092 87

* Of this sum, the greater part is the contribution of the Ladies in the several Unitarian Societies in this city.

King's Chapel, - - -	$150 00
Brattle Square, - - -	114 00
Federal Street, - - -	190 00
South Congregational, -	51 00
Hollis Street, - - -	192 13
First Church, - - -	43 00
West Church, - - -	76 25
New South, - - -	150 00
New North, - - -	62 50
Purchase Street, - -	48 06
Twelfth Congregational, -	70 00
	$1146 94

Amount brought up, - - -			$3092 87
From David Reed, on account of his note,		8 65	
For Tracts sold by Gray and Bowen, -		554 05	
" Interest on money loaned, - -		4 01	
" Interest allowed by the Treasurer for money in his hands, - - -		34 75	— 601 46
			$3694 33

EXPENDITURES.

Sundry incidental expenses, as per account current, - - - -		$51 68	
Donation to Unitarian Church in City of Washington, - - - -		200 00	
Paid Rev. E. Q. Sewall, for missionary services in Rochester, N. Y.,	$20		
" Rev. Cha's Briggs, for missionary services in Western States, -	50		
" Rev. Edward A. Edes, for missionary services in Farmington, Maine, - - - -	10		
" Rev. Isaac B. Pierce, for missionary services in Trenton, New York, - - - -	25		
	—	105 00	
" for printing and binding Tracts,		1607 87	
" Rev. Dr Tuckerman, one year's salary, as Domestic Missionary in Boston, - - -	600		
" " additional grant, - -	200		
	—	800 00	
" Gray and Bowen, one year's salary, as General Agents, -		200 00	
			2964 55
Balance on hand, - - -			$729 78

Boston, May 24, 1831. The undersigned have examined the foregoing accounts, and find them correctly cast and properly vouched, and that the balance now in the hands of the Treasurer is seven hundred and twentynine dollars and seventyeight cents.

(*Signed*) Henry J. Oliver, Abel Adams, } *Auditors.*

Rev. George Ripley of Boston, and Rev. Bernard Whitman, of Waltham, were appointed to collect votes. The officers of the last year were reelected, with the exception of Mr Parkman and Mr Gannett, who declined a reelection to the offices which they had held the year past. Thanks were voted to these gentlemen for their services. Rev. Mr Gannett, of Boston, was placed on the Executive Committee, in the room of Mr Parkman; and Rev. Mr Young, of Boston, was chosen to fill the office of Domestic Secretary. The Association adjourned to meet at seven o'clock, in the Federal street Church.

A heavy rain prevented the church from being filled at the hour of adjournment; but before eight o'clock it was crowded. Prayer was offered by Rev. Mr Harding, of New Salem. The annual Report of the Domestic Secretary, on behalf of the Executive Committee, was then read.

SIXTH ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION

ON DOMESTIC AFFAIRS.

The Committee, to whose care is entrusted the business of this Association, will in the present as in former Reports, give an account of the manner in which they have executed their trust, and will add such remarks as seem to them pertinent to this anniversary.

The influence of the Association has been more widely and powerfully felt the last year than in any previous year, in consequence of the activity into which the Tract department has been brought by the excellent arrangements and the indefatigable fidelity of the General Agents. The result which was anticipated from the extensive connexions and well known zeal of the present Agents has been realized. Within the last year the amount of sales from the Depository has almost reached nine hundred dollars, or more than double the whole amount received by the Association for the sale of tracts in the four years which preceded the appointment of the present agents. It is a pleasant circumstance, that a large number of our tracts have been sent to London, orders for them having been received from Great Britain to the value of three hundred and twentyseven dollars.

The monthly publication of the first series has been continued, and some additions have been made to the

second series. Besides the Annual Report and Dr Tuckerman's Tenth Report, twelve tracts of the first series and four of the second have been published, and twelve tracts of former years have been reprinted, making an aggregate of 72,500 pamphlets, and of nearly 2,000,000 pages. The Account of the Agents shows that these tracts are not accumulated on their shelves ; 68,500 copies having been sent from the Depository within the last twelve months.

The increase of activity which has been given to this branch of our operations may be learned from a comparison of successive periods. The Association has been in existence six years, in which time it has issued fortyeight 12mo. tracts of the first series, and ten 18mo. tracts of the second series, besides ten reports of the minister at large, and five reports of the Executive Committee ; or seventythree separate publications. Of these, eighteen have been published since the last anniversary ; in the previous year fourteen were published ; and if the remaining fortyone be divided between the first four years, it will give an average of ten and a fraction annually. The multiplication of new tracts has not driven those of an earlier date out of use ; twenty-four of the tracts of the Association have been reprinted, six of them have passed through a third edition, and of one six editions have been printed. It may be added, that the first edition of each tract has with one exception consisted of three thousand, and in many instances of five thousand copies. In view of these facts, the Committee deem their confidence in the utility of this department of their exertions perfectly just, and they can only anticipate a constant enlargement of its efficiency and beneficial operation.

They have in several instances authorized the distribution of tracts by their missionaries, and have made gratuities, when circumstances seemed to justify such an appropriation.

The ministry to the poor in Boston, under the care of this Association, has been prosecuted with a like spirit in him who fills this office, and with as clear evidence of satisfaction and benefit on the part of those whom he visits, as have distinguished this ministry in former years, and has been supported with even greater liberality by the inhabitants of this city, from whom the funds for this mission are wholly derived. Dr Tuckerman's health is inadequate to the discharge of all the duties for which there is opportunity in such an employment, and a strong desire has been felt both by him and by the Executive Committee, to obtain the services of another, who might at once share and extend the labors of this important function. They have not found the means of gratifying this desire, but they trust that in the Divine Providence some one will be raised to preach the gospel in its simplicity to the poor. The worship of the Chapel connected with this ministry has been conducted through the last winter and spring principally by clergymen of this city. The good of which Dr Tuckerman's service is the occasion has not been confined to Boston, nor to this side of the Atlantic. His Reports have awakened an interest in the subject of moral and religious instruction for the poor in other places, both in our own country and in Great Britain. The Committee are so well satisfied respecting this fact, that they have determined to publish the future Reports of the 'Minister at large' in their first series of tracts.

Since the last meeting, the connexion which then existed between this Association and the Boston Sunday School Society has been dissolved. Friendly relations are still maintained between the two societies; and it gives us much pleasure to advert to the proofs furnished in the last Annual Reports of the Sunday School Society, that it has been an instrument of great good to the community, by the impulse it has communicated to the sacred cause of religious education.

Within the last year, appropriations have been made for the support of preaching in Maine, in Vermont and New Hampshire, in Connecticut, in New York, and in the Western States. The demand for Unitarian preaching continues and increases. The congregations in Massachusetts which maintain this faith have been steadfast in the regular use of the ordinances of worship, and, we may hope, have been enriched with the spirit of power and of love and of a sound mind; while the churches which are scattered at wide intervals throughout other parts of our land, the lights and guardians of truth, have been strengthened inwardly and outwardly, having had experience of comfort and joy, and having also enlarged the boundaries of their influence. To the church in Washington, which was oppressed by a heavy debt, the Committee, in view of the great exertions made by its members to relieve themselves from this embarrassment, voted two hundred dollars; and they rejoice with those faithful adherents to a cause beset and almost shut in with difficulties, in the termination of their trials. Through the liberality of their friends here and elsewhere, added to their own large contributions, they have discharged the debt, and have settled a minister,

under whom they reasonably expect to enjoy satisfaction and growth, both in spiritual and temporal things. The society in Augusta, Geo., has enjoyed signal prosperity through the last year. The church in Cincinnati, Ohio, has received increase of ability and confidence; and judging from its present situation, is destined to extend an influence over a wide region. In Western Pennsylvania, Unitarian preaching has been regularly maintained in two or three important places. In one of the towns that line the North River, our faith has been preached for some time to attentive hearers. In Hartford, Conn., our brethren will probably erect in the course of the next year a house of worship. Such evidence have we, in circumstances addressed to the senses, of the spread and efficacy of our views of the gospel.

The Executive Committee proposed, the last autumn, to hold public meetings for the benefit of the Association in some of the shire towns of this commonwealth. The suggestion has been carried into effect in one instance; and so far as we have been able to learn, is recommended by the approbation of public sentiment and by the good effects of the meeting. By request of the county auxiliary, a deputation from the officers of the General Association attended a meeting in Worcester on the 14th of April, when addresses were made to a highly respectable audience, of such a nature as would promote an intelligent love of the principles to which we are devoted. Meetings of this kind, we think, will be useful to the community and advantageous to the Association. The public celebration of our anniversary in this city is an occasion which excites much

interest; and by the communication of sympathy and encouragement is felt to a great distance.

The condition of the various instruments for diffusing a knowledge of our opinions, and for bringing them into more powerful action upon our own hearts, of which a sketch was given in the last Report, remains essentially the same. The number of our periodical works has been increased within the last year. Dover in New Hampshire, Meadville in Pennsylvania, and Augusta in Georgia, is each the seat of a publication devoted to the support of our faith. The Christian's Manual has been discontinued, but its place will be supplied by another publication from the same press.

We are naturally led, from the part which this Association has taken in the distribution of religious light, to a notice of prominent circumstances in the religious history of the past year. They merit our attention, as indications of the state both of sentiment and of action, which prevails on the subject in which we are most deeply interested — the momentous subject of christian improvement. The last year, we may observe, has been one of great prosperity throughout our land. Various branches of industry which had previously languished have revived, and from every part of the Atlantic shore, but particularly from this city, has the voice of busy and profitable enterprise risen to swell the sound of our national happiness, which is stirring the hearts of men in the old world to desire and obtain a similar condition of freedom and prosperity. At the same time the nature of our civil institutions has allowed and occasioned, as it probably ever will produce, an

activity of the public mind on matters of ephemeral importance, which occupies its energies at the expense of moral principle and religious feeling. The spirit of worldliness engendered in a season of commercial and mechanical enterprise is unfavorable to the devout and heavenly habits of the christian character, and the tumult of passions of which earthborn excitement is the origin is at variance with the peaceful and charitable temper of the gospel. On the other hand, the last year has been distinguished by the dissemination of light and the increase of inquiry on some of the most important means of human improvement, particularly on education, an instrument which can scarcely be managed in such a way as not to affect the interests of religion.

Views of this nature are, however, too general to afford satisfaction to one who is desirous to ascertain the progress or decline of christian truth in a community. And in regard to what we esteem the truth of the gospel of God the Father and of our Lord Jesus Christ, we must discover more direct evidences of its approach to an ascendency over error, whether of opinion or of practice. For charity and justice alike forbid us to assume that Unitarian Christians are the only faithful, though we may account them the most consistent, friends of liberty, order, virtue and human happiness. Yet it may not be forgotten that general improvement, where it is not the result of correct opinions concerning the nature and duty of man and the character of the Divine Being and of his government, opens the way for such opinions. The progress of knowledge through a land, awakening the minds and expanding

the hearts of men, is like the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord.

In more immediate connexion with the prevalence of christian truth in our country, the Committee deem it sufficient to advert to four circumstances which arise in the retrospect of a single year.

The first is the direction which religious controversy has taken; perhaps we should say the character which it has assumed; towards which it has been approaching; and which, at length, it almost of necessity exhibits. The peculiarities of its present state are two. It is a contest for right rather than for opinion, for the liberty of forming one's faith, and not for the soundness of one's belief. Intimately as it is connected with the character and fate of just opinions, it involves questions of broader extent, and therefore of more vital interest than any particular doctrine can present. The ground to be defended is not a mode of belief, but the exercise of thought — the privilege, on which alone rests the responsibleness, of the human mind to examine and decide for itself; a privilege, which neither civil nor ecclesiastical minister, neither an individual nor a party has received authority from nature or from scripture, from God who has not given it, or from man who could not give it, to infringe in the slightest degree. — The other peculiar feature of this controversy is its *personal* bearing. It relates to conduct as well as to principles, to men and their measures even more than to doctrines and their fruits. We lament the necessity of such an exposure. We deplore the state of things, and the attempts to aggravate the mischiefs of that state, which obliged the friends of mental, of reli-

gious, of christian liberty to use the only weapon, whose blow would be fatal to the arrogance of an exclusive spirit. That such controversy must be productive of immediate evil, by inflaming the spirit which it rebukes, is clear; but that it will effect immediate and great good, by rousing the people to a proper estimation of their rights, dangers and duties, cannot be doubted; while its ultimate result will be seen in the overthrow of a power which, if once permitted to erect its throne upon the servitude of the mind, would crush the energies of intellect, and pervert, if it did not scorn, the sympathies of the heart. Above all and before all other principles would we maintain the principle of freedom for the soul which Christ died to redeem from every sort of bondage, whether to its own passions, or to another's will — to the world or to the church; and while we exhort our brethren to exercise the forbearance, the discrimination, and the humility which are among the plainest of christian duties, we hope that the voice of their unequivocal displeasure will be heard from the one extreme to the other of our land, and be borne from the eastern shore across the mountains and the vallies, till it reach the western ocean, putting to everlasting silence the threats and mandates of spiritual domination.

The next circumstance, on which we pause in our review of the past year, is the character of the measures adopted by the more numerous sects of Christians for the spread of religion. These measures are best designated by a name, which, from its use both by those who approve and by those who condemn such scenes, cannot be misunderstood. The extensive and simultaneous revivals that have been witnessed, or at

least announced, will make this year memorable in the religious annals of our country. This Committee need not express their disapprobation of revivals, based on the principles and conducted in the manner which recent events have made notorious; nor is it necessary for them to utter their conviction of the sincerity of most of the persons who kindle and feed the excitement; nor will they withhold their admiration of the skill that devised, and of the perseverance which applies these means of affecting the human mind. But they cannot contemplate the action of such an instrumentality without anticipating its probable effect upon the cause of true religion. This they believe will be partially disastrous; but if the friends of more rational and sober measures wisely use their opportunities of usefulness, will be finally beneficial. In spite of prejudice on the one hand, and unconcern on the other, extravagance works its own ruin. When error exposes its whole deformity, public sentiment loathes it. The measures recently introduced into our eastern cities and villages, to create or prolong revivals, are too clearly the production of human ingenuity; they interfere too directly and frequently with domestic comfort and duty; they exhibit religion in too unnatural a position; they present the divine agency in too questionable shapes, to be very long a source of delusion. Correct taste and humble piety, as well as sound philosophy, will discard them. It has been a matter of surprise, that their effect was not more powerful before their character was understood, and a security thus given to the mind against them; for if ever an instrumentality was invented suited to break down the powers of the mind,

and multiply the trophies of conquest over the understanding and the will, it is this; which by exciting the fears and stimulating the sympathies arrests the attention, and then wearies the soul with a succession of appeals, whose frequency allows no interval for calm judgment, while their violence increases with their number, till the spirit yields itself, perhaps in despair and perhaps from mere inability of longer resistance, to the forces that have assailed it. And this is called conversion by the divine spirit! They who stand aloof from the excitement must be either grieved or disgusted; and thousands are led to question the truth of a system, which deals so unfairly with the human mind, and sheds such influences upon society. They, who confound whatever passes under the name of religion with that which alone deserves the name, become sceptics; while some, losing both religious principle and moral restraint, are hardened in wickedness. But they, who have the means and exercise the power of discerning between the false and the true, the good and the bad, rejecting the human and mischievous, cleave with a stronger because a more intelligent and a happier faith to the religion of the Bible. We, who can help such persons to make this selection, have a high duty to perform.

The third fact, to which the Committee would draw attention, is the progress of religious opinion among other classes of Christians. It is curious to mark the changes, which silently proceed till they have gone so far, that the distance between present opinions and those of former days is too great to escape the notice of any one who will turn his eyes upon it. In the last Report

which the Committee presented to this Association, they collected the sensible indications of the spread of our faith. There is another class of facts, more delicate and less easily defined, but not less satisfactory to one who is accustomed to weigh evidence. Multitudes pass under the name of Trinitarians and Calvinists, who believe neither in the Deity of Jesus Christ nor in any one of the peculiar tenets of Calvinism. Multitudes are attached to the prevalent sect in the part of the country in which they live by associations, habits or interests which they lack either courage or inducement to break, though in sentiment they differ materially from the leaders and the standards of the sect. Multitudes believe the simple doctrines of Unitarian Christianity, without knowing the fact, for the two sufficient reasons, that they have never dared to avow their secret misgivings of the popular theology, and that they have heard such a misrepresentation of Unitarianism as corresponds to the faith of no one. The evidence on which these statements rest is of a nature which cannot and need not be condensed into this Report. The gradual change in theological doctrine, to which we have adverted, is too palpable to be overlooked or mistaken. The various explanations which are given of the Trinity, the different theories which are advanced respecting the atonement, the public correspondence which has been maintained between the Divinity Schools of Andover and New Haven, the warm dispute which has arisen in the Presbyterian Church of the Middle States, the recent establishment in this city of an Orthodox journal, which condemns the departure of the Orthodox community from the true faith as strongly as any mem-

bers of this community have condemned the heresy of Unitarianism, the late adoption by the advocates of revivals in this region of measures and principles similar to those which they solemnly reprobated a few years since, — what do all these things prove, if not that theological opinion is constantly changing, and deviating from the standards of Orthodoxy which each successive age has erected, towards more extreme error on the one side and towards the truth on the other? What also do the signs of the times show, if not that the majority of Christians are receding from the absurdity and mystery of former periods, and are approaching — we say not, and we comparatively care not, whether consciously or unconsciously — the simple and practical faith of the apostles and early disciples of the cross? In the providence of God the Protestant world will disencumber itself of the errors, to which it has for centuries clung with a constancy equal to the zeal with which it has denounced the errors that it discovered in the Papal Church. However gradually it part with them and however insensible it may be to the change, so long as we perceive its approach to the gospel of our Lord, we will rejoice, and hail the promise of its final complete deliverance.

The Committee will detain the Association with their farther remarks only while, in the last place, they direct their thoughts upon the most important view which can be taken of any period of time. What has been the influence of the last year upon the practical purposes of our religion? Have they been promoted or neglected? Have they been better understood and more faithfully regarded? Has there been an increase of piety, of

good morals, of christian virtue? Upon these questions it becomes the Committee to speak with modesty, and to confine themselves to the particular portion of the Christian Church with which they are connected by the greatest number of sympathies. They do not hesitate to express their belief, that practical religion has gained an increase of power among Unitarian Christians. They think they may confidently declare, that its importance has been more deeply felt, its character more justly comprehended, and its effects more frequently realized, than in former years. They would not indeed, unless compelled by stern necessity, believe the opposite of this statement. They would not, for their own sake and their brethren's sake, have the shame and sin resting on them of a decrease of those fruits, for which they chiefly prize their faith. They have seen the number of professors of this faith, and the number also of those who silently believe it, augmented. They have discerned, wherever they looked, signs of its progress and triumph over false doctrine. But what pleasure would they take in such observation, if they found that this faith when put to the test lacked spiritual efficacy? — if it made men no better, if it did not quicken their love of God, nor incite them to imitate him who went about doing good? Why should they wish to multiply the adherents to a cause, whose advocates disgraced, or at least failed to recommend it, by their lives? Anxiously therefore have they looked for the evidences of a growing attention to the spiritual and moral purposes of our religion. They repeat that their acquaintance with society has justified the belief that such evidences exist, and will present themselves to

every candid observer. Unitarian Christians are desiring better nourishment for their souls than controversy can give them. They welcome every addition to the means of strengthening the divine life of the soul. They bestow more care upon the religious education of the young. They value their opinions more highly for their connexion with the heart and life. This we say, because we hold it to be the simple truth, which justice requires should be spoken.

Yet when we compare the practical effects of our faith with the character it is meant to produce in the individual and in society, we perceive the immense distance that must be passed, before we shall arrive at the stature of perfection in Christ Jesus.

To this point therefore would the Committee, in conclusion, direct the thoughts, anxieties, labors and prayers of their friends. We are pledged to no political party. We are attached to no school in philosophy. We are bound to no secular interest. We are devoted to no sectarian purpose. But we are pledged, by our understandings, our consciences and our affections; we are bound, by our gratitude to God, our love of Christ and our philanthropy; we are attached, through our fears and our hopes; we are devoted, heart and hand, to the obedience of the gospel, to the interests of the immortal soul, to the glory of God. Before such purposes, all other ends lose their importance. And if, with the conviction that for these purposes our religion was introduced, by divine agency and with suffering of which our earth was never before the scene, — if too, with the declaration on our lips, that the end of Christ's teaching, life, death and resur-

rection, the end of man's nature and discipline, is a holy character, — if too, with the knowledge of our responsibleness, and after having passed through the stages of polemic discipline which belong to the introduction of a particular class of opinions, when we may now carry our great object of personal and social excellence into effect, — we are unfaithful at once to our privileges and to our duties, we shall be of all men most guilty. If we perform the service laid on us by the good providence of our Heavenly Father, which has led us into the truth, — if our lives confirm our words, and the savor of holiness be diffused from our characters, — if, in the lines of Watts, 'we so let our works and virtue shine, to prove the doctrine all divine,' — then may we, in view of our private and our public labors, repeat without presumption the apostle's testimony concerning himself; 'I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge shall give me at that day.'

After the Report had been read, Professor FOLLEN, of Cambridge, moved its acceptance, and offered some remarks on several subjects which it suggested.* He spoke of the character and utility of tracts; wished for greater readiness in the community to write and circulate them; and would be glad to see one or two on the subject of church architecture and sacred music, in

* See Notice on the second page.

respect to which he thought that Unitarians, as well as other denominations of Christians, were wanting in correct taste. He then adverted to the adaptation of Christianity to relieve and raise the poor, and commended the ministry established in Boston by this Association for that purpose. Having dwelt for a few moments on the distinction recognised in the Report between controversy for opinions and controversy for rights, he closed with an expression of concurrence in the views there offered respecting the paramount importance of a holy and devout life.

Samuel M. Burnside, Esq., of Worcester, seconded the motion for the acceptance of the Report. After alluding to the principles, purposes and measures of the Association, which he cordially approved, he noticed the objection often brought against theological controversy, that it is injurious rather than beneficial to the interests of truth and religion. He denied the justice of this charge, and while he deprecated the abuses of controversy, maintained that it was indispensable and salutary, and supported this position by an appeal to facts drawn from the history of the progress both of science and religion. He illustrated this remark at some length, by showing that it had been the effect of theological controversy to bring the several sects of Christians nearer to a coincidence of opinion on religious subjects. He contended that there had been but two prominent religious parties since the Reformation, the Orthodox and the Liberal parties, and proceeded to show that they had been gradually approaching each other. He instanced particularly the three great doctrines of the trinity, atonement and original sin, on each

of which a comparison between the views advanced by Orthodox writers at the present day in this country and the tenets maintained by the Reformers of the sixteenth century, the Fathers of New England, and the Divines of the Westminster Assembly, would show a difference as great as that which now exists between those who are called Calvinists and Unitarians.

Rev. Mr May, of Brooklyn, (Conn.) expressed his approbation of the sentiments and language of the Report. He spoke particularly of the feelings with which he regarded the subject of religious liberty. There is, he said, in our country, a vast deal of mental slavery. But many are breaking away from it; Unitarians are advocates of this liberty; this Association is pledged to support and forward it; and he was happy to find the practice of Liberal Christians, generally, so accordant with their professions. He then urged the importance of education, and above all the necessity of cultivating the christian character, and exhibiting the 'fruits of the spirit.'

The President put the motion for the acceptance of the Report, which was adopted.

The Report of the Foreign Secretary would then have been read, but Mr Ware proposed, that as it might prevent other gentlemen from speaking it should be omitted, and the facts mentioned in the Report of the Domestic Secretary should be repeated for the information of those persons who had entered the house within the last hour. After this was done,

Rev. Dr Nichols, of Portland, (Maine,) rose, and having observed that he was induced to speak solely by

the interest of the occasion, enlarged on the peculiar wants of the times, and the means of supplying them. The power of authority, he said, had gone by. This is seen in domestic government, in political affairs and in matters pertaining to religion. What substitute is to be provided? Moral influence. Liberal Christianity is now more needed than ever before. It is the only system that will reach the minds and affect the hearts of thinking men. Human traditions and creeds have lost their power. Plain, simple truth, which all can perceive and feel, is what is wanted at the present day. For this the community look to Liberal Christians. They must not be indifferent to these claims upon them. The views of the Association, he thought, were suited to the present emergency, and on this account he entered heartily into its spirit and plans. Dr N. concluded with stating that the prospects of Liberal Christianity in Maine were such as to gratify its friends. There was a prevailing interest in the subject, and the professors of liberal sentiments were constantly increasing in number and strength.

Rev. Mr Thomas, of Concord, (N. H.) expressed his sense of the value of such meetings as this. He spoke of the difficulties and discouragements encountered by those, who like himself, were settled in remote places, where they were surrounded by societies holding views of religion at variance with theirs. They were much in want, he said, of professional sympathy; they expected it from the Association, and came up to its anniversary to be inspired with the spirit of their brethren, to be cheered by the expression of religious feeling,

and to be excited to perseverance in the good work. He had been delighted and refreshed by the spirit manifested on this occasion, and should return to his labors with renewed strength and animation. He concluded by remarking that the prospects of Liberal Christianity in New Hampshire were highly gratifying.

The usual Doxology was then sung by the assembly, and at half past nine o'clock the Association

Adjourned *sine die.*

The Report of the Foreign Secretary is now printed in connexion with the proceedings of the anniversary.

REPORT OF THE FOREIGN SECRETARY

TO THE

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE A. U. A.

Gentlemen, — I have attempted in the following pages to comply with your request, that I would present to you some of the results of my observations on the character and condition of Unitarian Christianity abroad, as it fell under my view during my recent absence in Europe. I fear that what I have been able to do will hardly possess the interest you anticipate, as I am obliged, from want of notes taken on the spot, and other reasons, to confine myself to very general statements. I feel confident, however, that my impressions and recollections, as I shall state them, will be found essen-

tially correct, and hope they may do something toward giving to the members of our body a just idea of the situation and opinions of their brethren in other lands.

I begin with Great Britain, where I found myself at once amongst brethren. They received me with the greatest kindness and cordiality, and gave perpetual proof of the affectionate interest with which they are accustomed to regard their American friends. Of this I received daily and hourly the most gratifying testimony. Laboring, as they do, under grievous disadvantages from the injurious influence of the National Establishment, and congratulating us upon our freedom from similar hindrances, they are led to entertain an exaggerated idea of the facilities which exist in this country for the spread of truth, and a romantic expectation of its triumph. With an amiable enthusiasm, too, they fancy our lives and attainments as a religious people to correspond to the privileges of our situation, and persuade themselves that there must exist amongst us all the zeal and spirituality of character, which, under such propitious circumstances, ought to exist. It might be well if we could learn from hence to estimate more highly our advantages, and feel more thoroughly our obligation. At any rate, they are ready to give the warmest welcome to a fellow believer from our shores, and to make him feel that the disciples of the same Lord are one, however far apart their habitations may have been cast.

It was my privilege to be present in many of their places of public worship, and to hear many of their preachers in various parts of the kingdom. The mode of conducting public worship, is, in some respects, dif-

ferent from that which prevails amongst us, and for that reason, perhaps, not so congenial to our feelings. Accustomed, as we are, to extemporaneous prayer, we do not at once reconcile our feelings to the practice of reading a written form. I fancied, too, that, generally speaking, the style of preaching has less of earnestness and warmth than that which prevails in our churches at home. This is probably no more than may be accounted for from difference of national character; and certainly there was no defect of just, sensible and forcible presentation of religious subjects, while sometimes there was to be found strong and moving eloquence.

In June, 1829, I was present at the annual meeting of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association in London, and again in June, 1830, at a special meeting of the Association in Manchester. I appeared, on both occasions, as a representative of the Am. Unit. Assoc.; and nothing could be more gratifying than the hearty expression of good will and kind feeling toward this country, which was, in various ways, called forth. May it not be long before we have an opportunity of reciprocating it! The attendance at these meetings was numerous, and their influence likely to be good. But as particular accounts of them have been published, it is unnecessary for me to say more than to express the great satisfaction with which I remember them, and the many excellent persons to whose acquaintance they introduced me.

I also attended two successive years the annual examination of Manchester College, York, of which the Rev. C. Wellbeloved, so well known in this country, is Principal. The college, designed as a seminary for

general education, is at present almost exclusively a theological institution, and trains up nearly all the candidates for the Unitarian ministry. The number of students is not large, but they are under the superintendence of most able men, and it was impossible not to be highly gratified with all that appeared of the course of instruction, and the proficiency of the pupils. I could not learn that any similar institution among the dissenters enjoys greater advantages for a theological education than this.

As regards the prosperity of the denomination and its increase, I could learn nothing decided. But from what I could ascertain, I should judge that, taking the whole country together, there are no clear signs at present of growth or decay. If in some places the cause seems declining, in others it is as certainly making progress; and the many flourishing societies which exist in the large towns, give evidence of anything rather than declension. In Scotland there is a perceptible growth. In Ireland the recent reformation in the Presbyterian Church has thrown large numbers into the ranks of Unitarianism. In England the cause, having been longer settled, possesses the quiet strength of an old establishment; and though we might be unable to point to any prominent tokens of advancement, neither are there any obvious symptoms of decline. The language of its adversaries when they speak of its rapid extinction, is as little to be regarded as the same language when used by them in reference to America, where it is well known to be without foundation.

It was the gratifying result of all my observations and inquiries to convince me, that there is, in the

main, far less difference between our English brethren and ourselves, in the points which characterize us as a denomination, than we have been accustomed to suppose. And as this is a matter of some interest and importance, you will allow me to dwell on it a little at large. And in the first place, the spirit of independent inquiry and personal responsibility is equally prevalent there. Every man thinks for himself, without measuring his opinions by others, or being controlled by any acknowledged human standard. Consequently there are, and there are understood to be, the most various shades of opinion. There is no standard, to which as a denomination they appeal. There are no writers whom they acknowledge as authorities, or as speaking in the name of the whole body. We have been accustomed in this country to hear of Priestley and Belsham, as leaders of the Unitarian body, and have been too ready to fancy them the acknowledged expounders of the faith in England. But the truth is, they are regarded there precisely as they are here, — with that personal attachment and veneration, indeed, which a knowledge of their worth has inspired; — but with no readier nor more general assent to their doctrinal views, or deference to their judgment; and with quite as strong objection to all which is offensive in the manner with which they have sometimes chosen to express themselves.

The obnoxious passages of these and of other eminent men, which are so often quoted here by our enemies, as characteristic of English Unitarianism, and which have been so unpalatable to our friends, form no more a part of the universal belief of our brethren *there*,

than of our brethren *here*. It is very well for a writer, who only means to cast odium on our sect, to cite such passages. As we have no creeds, or articles, or confessions, he quotes the language of prominent individuals. But not in England any more than here, does any individual pretend to represent authoritatively the general opinion, nor has an author appeared who is allowed to be the organ and expounder of the general faith. I think it important to insist on this, because a different opinion has been somewhat prevalent in this country without any foundation. Indeed, never was, nor can be imagined, a body of men more destitute of leaders, or in which every individual is more completely left to think and act for himself. If we look around amongst ourselves, and ask for the authorities, the guides, the controllers of our denomination, no one can point to them. There are none such, — neither among the living nor among the dead. It is equally so in Britain. And it is highly gratifying to discover this identity in the operation of our great and fundamental principles in both hemispheres; in both, the same exemption from human control — the same adherence to Christ as the only master, and the Scriptures as the only rule — the same singlehearted allegiance to truth and conscience, and the same mutual communion and co-operation in the midst of varieties of faith and form; Baptists and Pædo-baptists, Arians and Humanitarians, advocates and opposers of necessity, those who employ a liturgy and those who refuse it — not to mention other diversities — consenting to live and work together as brethren; no one allowing another

to interfere with his conscience, and no one seeking to interfere.

This personal independence has operated there, as it has done here, to embarrass, in some degree, the operations of those who have desired to create union of action, and to extend their leading principles through the influence of association and combined exertion. So fearful have many been lest such measures should lead to the abridgment of personal independence, that all operations of that nature have been comparatively languid. It is only the proof, from long experience, that this is not the necessary result, which has at length given to the British and Foreign Unitarian Association its present activity; — though it is still true, (as we have found it in regard to our own Association) that many of the best friends of religious liberality, look upon it coldly and doubtfully, and withhold from it their aid and countenance. This may retard the operations of zeal; but it is at least a proof of the sincerity with which our friends maintain the great principles of individual responsibility and entire liberty of thought.

Connected with this, and growing out of the same causes, I found in Great Britain an aversion to controversial preaching, and dislike of a sectarian spirit, precisely such as exists here. The sensitiveness on this point, is the same with that which is so prevalent in our congregations. I do not mean to say that this is the universal feeling; — in both countries there are individuals who love controversy, and minister to the feelings of sectarianism. But they do not form the mass, nor any considerable proportion of the people in either country;

perhaps I may say, not the class most esteemed. On the contrary, the more devout persons, together with the great majority of the people, are uneasy at the introduction of polemic discussions into the pulpit, and grieved at anything like illiberal remark upon other sects. They lament the necessity, (and many even doubt it,) which the state of the world has created, of canvassing disputed topics, and speaking loud in self defence. They would purchase at almost any sacrifice the silent enjoyment of their faith, without uttering or hearing a word respecting the differences which abound.

It is no evidence against the reality of this state of things, that so many controversial tracts are printed, and controversial sermons preached. These come mostly from the few persons who love discussion; and they are occasional; they do not exhibit the ordinary, but the extraordinary, style of preaching; and though preached from a sense of duty, they are listened to by many with pain and dissatisfaction. Sometimes this feeling is unduly sensitive. And this will be readily understood by our friends, who will perceive in it the exact counterpart of the feeling which exists at home.

Of the precise state of Doctrinal Sentiment in England, it is not easy to speak in small compass. It will be seen from what has been said, that there can be no statement of opinion which shall describe the whole body of our brethren. Different individuals differ widely; and what would strike one as a correct representation of the Christian scheme, would appear to another not a little faulty. We have been too ready to take the language of certain individuals in England, for the expression of a universal sentiment; and hence has

arisen in many minds a degree of coldness and suspicion toward that branch of the church. While the truth is, that ultra, or latitudinarian, views are no more the prevalent characteristic of that community than of this; that, in fact, an inhabitant of either land who should remove to the other, would find himself in a circle of religious sentiment not very materially different from that which he had left. And it ought to be added, that the progress of opinion seems to be tending daily to a more complete assimilation.

As regards the doctrine respecting the person of the Saviour, it is probable that in England there is a smaller proportion of believers in his preexistence than in this country; though ministers and congregations are to be found there holding this sentiment. In Ireland, on the other hand, it is probably the prevalent opinion. But the difference which was once attempted to be made between the two classes of antitrinitarians, there is now a universal disposition to reconcile. They act heartily together, and look with grief on the ground of separation which was once maintained by some of their prominent men.

It has been commonly thought, in this country, that among our English brethren the doctrines of necessity, of materialism, and of universal salvation, are accounted to form a part of their system of religious faith. This, however, I found to be an erroneous supposition. There has been amongst them a good deal of speculation on these points, and individuals have freely published their own convictions. But, as I was informed, these have never been considered as forming part of Unitarianism. The two first named subjects, necessity

and materialism, are regarded as properly speculations in *philosophy;* which those who hold them have defended from the scriptures also; — but not as *Unitarians;* for Unitarians have denied as well as advocated them. They constitute the philosophy of a part, not the religion of the whole.

With respect to the other doctrine, that which regards a future retribution, I found the mind of our brethren to be very much in the posture of our own in this country. There is no sentiment respecting it which can be termed the sentiment of the sect, except the rejection of the literal interpretation of eternal torments. Beyond this, with them as with us, there is a great diversity of opinions. But I could not learn that any have adopted the doctrine of some in this country, that there shall be no retribution beyond the grave. The mode of preaching on this subject, is much the same as amongst ourselves. I heard of a few, who, regarding the doctrine of universal salvation a positive and essential part of revelation, preach it as such; but the great majority are content to proclaim the general sanctions of a future judgment, without pretending to declare its precise character or limits; — being satisfied to teach that God will render to every man according to his works.*

Upon the three points now mentioned, I was assured

* The delay in the publication of this Report, enables me to confirm the positions of the few preceding paragraphs, by reference to an excellent discourse, received since they were written, by the Rev. R. Aspland of Hackney, entitled, 'The religious belief of Unitarian Christians, truly stated, and vindicated from popular misrepresentation.' pp. 15 — 18.

that there is less fondness for speculating, and less boldness in it, than formerly; that there is a rapidly growing taste for the practical and serious in preference to the philosophical and speculative; — and individuals were named, who, having in their younger days embraced the doctrines of materialism and necessity, had abandoned them in maturer life.

There can, therefore, be no doubt, that whatever may have been, or may be, the opinions of individuals, on these and similar questions, there is no received sentiment, properly called the *sentiment of the denomination*, which is different from that which prevails in this country. All that can be said is, that many inquisitive minds have engaged in these inquiries with an interest and zeal which have not been excited here, and have therefore, sometimes come to results, to which scarcely any have arrived amongst us.

I will only add, that I received the uniform and universal assurance, that there was a silent and perceptible growth of a devout and religious spirit. The day of warfare was passing by, and men were delighting to turn from the defence of the outworks of the faith, to the cultivation of the quiet and spiritual graces within. The principles which they had been establishing were taking every day a more practical turn, and becoming more and more dear to the hearts of their professors. And they were gathering new proofs, that their doctrines were worthy the efforts it had cost to sustain them, because their fruits of holiness were becoming daily more abundant.

The religious affairs of Ireland, at the time of my visit to that country, were approaching an interesting crisis. It had happened there, as it occurred here, that in the silent and unquestioned progress of opinion, many of the ministers of the Synod of Ulster had departed from the rigid authority of the Presbyterian standards, and adopted more liberal views of Christian truth. For this crime they were at length, in a manner, called to account. For successive years an ardent controversy was carried on — not from the press alone, as in this country, but face to face, at the public meetings of the Synod. I need not go into particulars, as the whole history is well known. Suffice it to say, that the liberal members of the Synod, in the spirit of their religion and the love of peace, desired to maintain their ancient connexion with the Presbyterian church. They contended earnestly for the Protestant right to inquire and judge for themselves concerning religious doctrine, and denied the authority of any human being to call them to account. The Orthodox members insisted on the right to judge them for their faith, and to exclude them from fellowship, if in their opinion it were found heretical. The discussion had been animated, severe, and powerful. It was drawing toward a close when I arrived upon the scene. I had the honor of seeing and knowing the upright and devoted men, who had stood forth so intrepidly for the rights of conscience and in opposition to spiritual domination. I was witness of their conversation, I saw something of the trial through which they were passing, and have brought away feelings of respect, affection, and sympathy, which never can die away from my heart, so long as truth and integ-

rity are honorable names among men. The result of the struggle was what had been anticipated, and is well known. Our Unitarian brethren formed a new Presbytery, in which I trust they will enjoy the full measure of the liberty and peace which in their ancient connexion were denied them. And though compelled, contrary to their habits and their inclination, to enter upon a controversial war, we may hope that it will be overruled, as similar events were overruled in this country, to the more firm establishment and more wide diffusion of the simple truth.

The excitement which thus existed in the north of Ireland, extended forward to the south, and I was present at a meeting of the friends of Unitarianism in Dublin, at which the feelings called forth by the solemn crisis were uttered with great fervor and power. There had long existed in that city, as in Belfast and other places, societies of Liberal Christians, who worshiped God according to their consciences, and left their fellow christians to do the same, without attaching themselves to any party in the church. But the times were changed, and they could do so no longer. They were compelled to assume an attitude and take a name; and consequently there have suddenly appeared to spring up about forty churches, bearing the Unitarian name, and many of them willing to associate in defence of their calumniated faith. The Unitarian Christian Society of Ireland is organized, and we hail many among the devout and intelligent inhabitants of that island as our open coadjutors in the holy cause of religious freedom and christian truth.

I have only to add a few words respecting Geneva, in which place I spent a few days. This undoubtedly is one of the most interesting spots in Christendom. The past history of the Genevan church, as one of the elder and most illustrious daughters of the Reformation, its advancement in liberality beyond the other reformed churches, the obloquy to which it has in consequence been exposed, and the violence and perseverance of the recent assaults upon its fame, all conspire to render it an object of intense interest, and have drawn toward it alike the regards of the friends and the enemies of religious progress.

The Genevan church is a national establishment, as truly as the English church; being under the control of the government of the state, and its ministers being supported from the treasury of the commonwealth. It is of course subject to all the evils which spring from such an arrangement; of which not the least is the difficulty of amending old abuses, and reforming inconvenient practices. Hence it is its greater honor, that it has stepped forward in the cause of theological improvement beyond the rest of the Protestant world; for it is the nature of an establishment to remain stationary, yet Geneva has made signal advances. It has thus drawn upon itself the enmity of the Orthodox in all quarters of the christian world. Within a few years systematic efforts have been made to produce a revolution in opinion. Strangers from abroad, emissaries of foreign nations, have interfered to decry the ministers as heretics and deceivers, to render the people dissatisfied, and to convulse the peaceful community with a polemic war, and restore the doctrines of

Calvin to their ancient influence. In consequence of these attempts, the authority which pertains to an establishment to declare what shall be preached by its ministers was exercised, and measures were taken to prevent the discussion of doctrinal differences in the national pulpits. The Calvinists, who could not remain in the establishment on this condition, formed themselves into a society of dissenters, which was tolerated by government, and has continued in existence to the present time. It has done what it could to carry back the people to the old doctrines of Calvin, and alienate them from the present order of things. But I could not learn that its success had been great. The people are still attached to the existing institutions; and know the piety and fidelity of their ministers too well to withdraw from them their confidence and affection.

It has been the great object of the national church to keep the people from the agitation of questions which would endanger the ancient harmony of this little community. This is the anxious desire of the community itself. The ministers, who, though liberal, are by no means of an exact uniformity of faith, acquiesce in this state of the public mind. They preach the great principles of truth and duty in which all can agree, and leave untouched those discussions which might kindle sectarian fires. Even the press, notwithstanding the virulent assaults made upon the faith and character of the clergy, has remained comparatively silent, through an extreme reluctance to all theological agitation. Individuals however there are, who greatly question the propriety of this course, and would have

the press made active. Of these an aged layman, M. de Luc, had just published a small treatise on the trinity when I visited the city, and M. Chenevière, the distinguished Rector of the Academy, was preparing a work on the same subject, which has since been printed. Whether the controversy will be pursued, and if it be, what will be its effects, time only can disclose.

The measures which were taken by the authorities of Geneva to prevent the growth of doctrinal controversy have been represented as persecution, and a violent outcry has been made as if this were the consequence of the theological opinions of the clergy. Now those measures may have been wrong and unwise ; but they had their origin simply in the fact, that the church is a national establishment ; and in what was done it only acted consistently with its character as an establishment. A national church never allows its ministers to infringe its rules of discipline. All we can ask is, that it exercise its authority with moderation and equity ; and this praise I think we cannot withhold in the present instance, however we may disapprove the principle of state establishments in general. The virulence of the outcry seems to have arisen from confounding together the proceedings at Geneva, and those in the neighboring Canton de Vaud. In the latter, where the establishment is Orthodox, violent measures have been resorted to, of banishment &c, for the purpose of silencing the more zealous Orthodox who exercised a warmer zeal in their religion than the government of the church thought reasonable ; and this persecution of warm Calvinists by lukewarm Calvinists has been all laid at the door of the Unita-

rians of Geneva. But the truth is, that Geneva tolerates these zealous Calvinists, allowing them to worship quietly within her walls, while the Orthodox state imprisons and banishes them ; a state, which at the same time shows its zeal for Orthodoxy by anathemas against the heresy of Geneva.

I find that I have left myself no room for enlarging on several other topics, as I designed. I will therefore close with briefly saying, that as far as I could learn, there is little danger of any retrograde movement in religious opinion. The people will continue faithful to their light. There are evils attendant on the present form of their religious institutions, which are not inconsiderable in the view of an American Congregationalist, and of which they themselves appear to be not altogether insensible. But they will not go back to Calvinism. They are, however, less grounded in the evidences of the doctrines they hold than they should be, and their extreme aversion to theological controversy may expose individuals to the power of able assailants without the requisite means of defence. In this respect, and in the consequent greater clearness and definiteness of their views, the Unitarians of Great Britain and America may possibly be considered as having the advantage of them. — They are accustomed to regard practical religion, founded on the leading undisputed truths of the New Testament, as the one only thing. This their ministers inculcate in fervent and eloquent discourses from the pulpit, and by a thorough course of religious education, through which all the young are expected to pass. This latter feature in their system, of which something has been

known here by means of the Geneva Catechism, is one of their favorable and happy distinctions. Their love of peace is certainly another. And another is, the consistent fidelity with which they have adhered to the principles of the Reformation, and carried perpetually forward that glorious work, when nearly all Christendom beside had come to a stand; — having abolished subscription to a creed, and possessing a translation of the scriptures, which, instead of being slavishly bound to it, they seek to improve and perfect by frequent revisions, and a catechism and liturgy which they are ready to alter whenever they find they can make them better. In these things the church of Geneva is an example to the christian world. May it have grace to continue faithful, and may the other churches have grace to imitate its fidelity.

I have thus, gentlemen, briefly sketched a few of the impressions which you have requested me to put on paper, as the substance of a communication to the Association. I wish they were more worthy of your attention. Such as they are, they are very cheerfully and respectfully submitted

By your friend and servant,

HENRY WARE, Jr.,
For. Sec'y A. U. A.

Cambridge, May 24, 1831.

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1831 — 32.

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INDEX TO VOL. IV.

A.

Age, the present, favorable to the spread of pure Christianity, 101, sqq. Circumstances of the social condition of, ib. Improved habits of thinking of, 104. State of information of, 109. State of feeling of, 114.

American Unitarian Association, Reports of for the Sixth Anniversary, 285, sqq. Receipts of for 1830, 31, 286. Expenditures of for 1830, 31, 287. Increased influence of, 289. Tract department of, ib. Ministry to the poor in Boston, under the care of, 291. Connexion of with the Boston Sunday School Society dissolved, 292. Appropriations of for preaching in Maine, Vermont, and other States, ib.

Antiquity and Revival of Unitarian Christianity, 221, sqq.

Arianism, account of in the 4th century, 231.

B.

Belsham, how regarded by Unitarians in England, 312.

Boston, ministry to the poor in, 291.

Boys, poor, of Boston, between seven and fourteen years of age, who cannot read, 252. Who are not in the grammar schools, 254. Who are truant from the schools, 255. Between fourteen and sixteen or seventeen, who have no regular employment, 258.

British and Foreign Unitarian Association, anniversary of in 1829, 310.

Burnside, S. M. Esq. remarks of at the annual meeting of A. U. A. 305.

C.

Carpenter, Dr Lant, on the beneficial tendency of Unitarianism, 137, sqq.

Changes of opinion among the Orthodox, 299.

Children, how regarded by Unitarians, 37.

'Children of wrath,' what Paul meant by, 169, sqq.

Children of the Poor in Boston, claims of, 249, sqq. Classification of by the Minister at Large, 252, sqq. Male, between seven and fourteen years of age, ib. Female, of the same age, 258. Number of, growing up in ignorance and exposed to moral danger, 258. Male, between fourteen and sixteen or seventeen, who are without any regular employment, 258.

Christianity, pure, the prospects and claims of, 101, sqq. Unitarian, antiquity and revival of, 221, sqq.

Conscience, Orthodox plea of replied to, 18.

Controversy, religious, the direction it has taken, 296. Effect of to bring the several sects of Christians nearer to a coincidence of opinion, 305.

Church, the Christian, its nature explained, 27.

D.

Doctrinal Sentiment in England described, 315.

Dublin, Ireland, Unitarianism in, 320.

E.

Early Religious Education, the importance and method of, 37, sqq.
Education, what is understood by the word, 40. Early, moral and religious, importance of, 41, sqq. Method of, 55, sqq.
England, state of Unitarianism in, 311. Controversial preaching, how regarded in, 314.
Ephesians 11. 3., explained, 469, sqq.
Epistles, Paul's, causes of obscurity of, 181, sqq.
Essay for the understanding of St Paul's Epistles, 181, sqq.
Europe, Prof. Ware's Report of Unitarianism in, 308, sqq.
Exclusionists, history of, 4. The reasonings by which they defend their conduct replied to, 6, sqq.
Exclusive System, what it consists in, 3. Who began it, 4. Its progress among Protestants, 5. Fallacy of the arguments by which it is supported exposed, 6, sqq. Evils of, 31.
Explanation of the words, 'By nature children of wrath,' 169, sqq.

F.

Females, education of, 46.
Follen, Prof., remarks of at the annual meeting of A. U. A.
Fundamentals in religion, the hackneyed plea of the Orthodox about, answered, 8, sqq.

G.

Geneva, state of the church in, 321. Progress of Unitarianism in, ib.
Girls, poor, in Boston, between seven and fourteen years of age, who cannot read, 258. Who are growing up in ignorance and exposed to moral danger, 257. Whose parents have little or no care for the culture of, ib.
Great Britain, feeling in, regarding Unitarians of this country, 309. Mode of conducting public worship in, 310.

H.

Home, piety at, 205, sqq. The best nursery of the Christian virtues, 207. The abode of life's purest happiness, 213.

I.

Influence of A. U. A., 286.
Inquisition, Spanish, compared with the system of the Exclusionists of this age and country, 22.
Ireland, progress of Unitarianism in, 311.

L.

Ladies of Boston, contributions of, for the ministry to the poor, 286.
Liberal Christianity, more needed now than ever before, 307. Character and condition of, in England, 309. In Ireland, 319. In Geneva, 321.
Locke's Essay for the understanding of St Paul's Epistles, 181, sqq. His method of reading the Epistles, 191.

M.

Manchester College, Eng., condition of, 310.
Mankind, how far creatures of education, 39.
Materialism, doctrine of, how viewed by English Unitarians, 316.
May, Samuel J., on Prejudice, 85, sqq. Remarks of at the annual meeting of the A. U. A., 306.

Method of religious education, 57, sqq.
Ministry to the poor in Boston, 291.
Minister at large, Mr Tuckerman, seventh Semiannual Report of, 249, sqq.
Montgomery, Rev. Henry, on the importance and method of early religious education, 37, sqq.
Mothers' influence in education, 44.

N.

Nature, study of, a means of religious education, 61.
Necessity, doctrine of, how regarded by English Unitarians, 316.
New England, people of, appealed to in regard to the Exclusionists, 31.
Nichols, Dr, remarks of, at the annual meeting of A. U. A.

O.

Officers of the A. U. A., for 1831–32, 326.
Orthodoxy, false and gloomy views presented by, 156. Changes in, 299.
Orthodox, their notions of fundamentals in religion examined, 8. Their plea of conscience by way of justifying exclusiveness, replied to, 17. Their distinction between ecclesiastical and civil penalties considered, 20. Their violent measures in the Canton de Vaud, 323.
Orthodox party, the, approaching the liberal party, in respect to the doctrines of the trinity, atonement, and original sin, 305.

P.

Palfrey, John G., on the prospects and claims of pure Christianity, 101, sqq.
Parents, Christian, address to, respecting the religious education of their children, 74, sqq.
Paul, Locke's Essay for the understanding of the Epistles of, 181, sqq. His style and temper, 183.
Periodical publications, Unitarian, increase of the number of, 294.
Piety at Home, 205, sqq.
Poor, children of, 249, sqq.
Preaching, controversial, how regarded in England, 314.
Prejudice, on, by Samuel J. May, 85, sqq. Its sources—1. An uncharitable temper, 89; 2. Ignorance, or a partial education, 91; 3. Caprice. Its effects—1. It throws a veil over truth, 34; 2. Destroys social happiness, 35; 3. Unfits the character for heaven, 96.
Priestly, how regarded in England by Unitarians, 312.

R.

Reformation, School of, at South Boston, account of, 266.
Religious education, early, the importance and method of, 37, sqq.
Religion, practical, advancement of, 301.
Report, Mr Tuckerman's Seventh Semiannual, 249, sqq. Sixth Annual, of the Treasurer of A. U. A., 286. Sixth Annual, of the Domestic Secretary of A. U. A., 289, sqq. Of the Foreign Secretary, 308.
Reports of the A. U. A. for the Sixth Anniversary, 285, sqq.
Revival of Unitarian Christianity, 234, sqq.
Revivals, how regarded by the Ex. Com. of A. U. A., 298.

S.

Saviour, the, opinions of Eng-

lish Unitarians as to the person of, 316.
School of Reformation at South Boston, account of, 266. Improvements in, suggested, 268. Great end and aim of, 270. Proper subjects of, 272.
Schools, Free, in Boston, 279.
Scotland, progress of Unitarianism in, 311.
Scriptures, the, reading of, a means of religious and moral education, 65.
Servants, selection of, 53.
'Signs of the times,' favorable to pure Christianity, 102, sqq.
Stetson, Caleb, on piety at home, 205, sqq.
Sunday School instruction, 55.

T.

Temper, regulation of, 22.
Thomas, Rev. Mr. remarks of at the annual meeting of A. U. A., 307.
Tracts of A. U. A., 290.
Truth, Christian, four circumstances favorable to the progress of, 296, 297, 299, 301. How we are to help it to prevail, 121, sqq.
Tuckerman, Mr, Seventh Semi-annual Report of, 249, sqq. His account of the morally neglected and vicious children in Boston, 252, sqq. The method he proposes for remedying the evils described, 260, sqq.

U.

Ulster, Synod of, in Ireland, conduct of, 319.
Unitarianism, the beneficial tendency of, 137, sqq. Encourages and rewards exertion of the understanding, 140. Presents one object of religious worship, of the highest affections of the heart, 144. Throws no impediment in the way of the great practical principles of the gospel, 147. Throws no impediment in the way of christian liberality and affection, 151. Shines forth resplendently in respect to the character and dispensations of the great Father of all, 156.
Unitarian Christianity, antiquity and revival of, 221, sqq. The religion of the N. T., 222. Character and condition of in England, Scotland and Switzerland, 309, sqq.
Unitarian Christians, increase of practical religion among, 302.
Universalism, how regarded by English Unitarians, 317.

V.

Vaud, Canton de, spirit and conduct of the Orthodox in, 323.
Voting persons in and out of the church objected to, 26.

W.

Walker, J., on the Exclusive System, 3, sqq.
Ware, Henry, Jr, Report of, as Foreign Secretary, to A. U. A. 308, sqq.
Ware, William, on the antiquity and revival of Unitarian Christianity, 221, sqq.
Washington, success of the Unitarian church in, 292.
Wells, Rev. Mr, suggestions of, as to the School of Reformation at South Boston, 267.

Y.

York, Eng. Manchester college at, 310.
Young, the, importance and method of the religious education of, 37, sqq.